THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN'S

Mystery Magazine

DECEMBER 50c

NEW	CHARLOTTE ARMSTRONG	crime & detection
Hercule Poirot	AGATHA CHRISTIE	super-natural?
NEW	JACOB HAY	spy story
NEW	PHYLLIS BENTLEY	Miss Phipps
Colonel March	JOHN DICKSON CARR	impossible crime
NEW	ANTHONY GILBERT	unusual crime
NEW	JON L. BREEN	Philo Vance!
NEW	URSULA CURTISS	don't miss!
NEW	EDWARD D. HOCH	spy story

10 NEW STORIES

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE IDEAL CHRISTMAS GIFT

(for you and your friends)

ELLERY QUEEN'S 1968 ANTHOLOGY

If your favorite newsstand is sold out . . . mail this coupon today and we'll rush you our new Anthology.

This new Anthology contains 2 short novels, 4 novelettes, and 16 short stories—A Who's Who of Whodunits by the master mystery writers of our age. The 1968 Anthology has 320 pages of memorable reading—and it is a gift your friends and family will be delighted to receive.

Mail the coupon below and copies will be rushed to you for choice mystery reading and pleasurable Christmas giving!

ELLERY QUEEN'S ANTHOLOGY 1968 Edition
505 Park Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

EQ-12-67

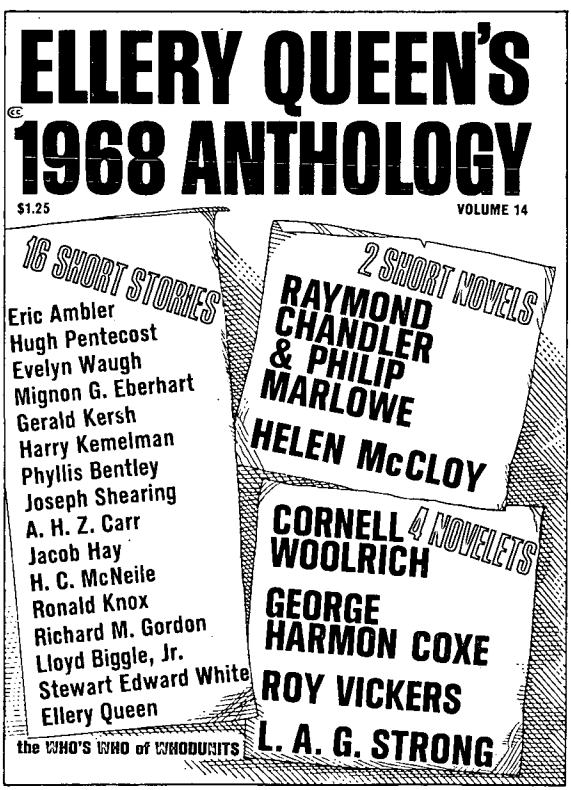
Please send me_____copies of ELLERY QUEEN'S ANTHOLOGY 1968 Edition Volume 14. Enclosed is $1.25 PLUS 25¢ for postage & handling for each copy.

Name_____
(please print)

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

(Turn to page 63 for extra coupon)



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

$70,000.00 IN CASH PRIZES!

"Your $1,200.00 check arrived this morning by Special Delivery. Thanks ever so much for your telephone call and prompt payment. It still doesn't seem possible. It's been a great thrill."

That's the way Emory Mead of Albany, N. Y., just one of our many big winners, reacted to receiving his cash prize. Dozens of men and women of all ages have cashed in as members of our exciting PUZZLE LOVERS CLUB.

Our Club winners got their cash awards for solving puzzles in their leisure time. Our Club also has awarded huge prizes for many other kinds of contests.

We've awarded cash in hundred-and-thousand-dollar units to retirees, sewing women, farmers, salesmen, war veterans, office workers, clerks, secretaries — people who never before dreamed of having the kind of money that movie stars make.

This announcement is an invitation to you, as a reader of this publication, to find out for yourself if you have the talent to win up to $70,000.00 in cash. If you are over 18 and like to play word games of any kind, the information below may lead you to thousands of dollars in extra cash that you may use as you wish.

Mrs. H. C. Despain, Houston, Tex., won $1,000.00 in cash in one month.

Ray Smith, Sacramento, Calif., won nearly $1,000.00 in Club contests.

Mrs. Florence Humphrey, Cincinnati, won $500.00 on just one puzzle.

WIN CASH MAIL NOW

YOU Can WIN Each Month!

Members of our Club win cash prizes at home, just by solving puzzles and entering Club contests. They turn an educational and enjoyable hobby into pure profit. **You can too!**

Your chief advantage in contests sponsored by our PUZZLE LOVERS CLUB is that you have only limited competition. Only members of the Club may compete and win.

In 1963 we offered our members $35,000.00. We actually paid out more cash than we said we would—$35,511.25, to be exact. In 1964, we again offered $35,000.00. Again, we paid out more than we promised—$40,778.11. And now we're offering our members $70,000.00 in cash prizes. Most contest groups offer about $4,500 or $5,000 a year. **Our Club gives you the opportunity to win double that every month!**

As a member of our Club you will be eligible to enter every cash prize contest we sponsor and you'll get at least four new contests each month. You'll have three weeks to solve each set of contests. One week after the deadline, you'll receive a new copy of our **Puzzle Lovers Newspaper** with names and addresses of all winners, correct solutions, and your new puzzle contests. When YOU win, you receive your prize within two weeks.

IT COSTS YOU NOTHING TO TRY OUR CONTESTS AND SEE IF YOU HAVE THE TALENT TO WIN

The coupon below will bring you, absolutely FREE, a sample copy of our **Puzzle Lovers Newspaper**, the only newspaper in the world exclusively devoted to contests (and it's published for members only). When your free copy of our newspaper arrives, sit down in a quiet place and read about our winners, our prizes, our contests. Try our stimulating word games to see if you can do them. You are under no obligation to enter our contests. If you do decide to go after our cash, there are no boxtops, no jingles to complete, nothing to buy.

Clip the coupon now and please be sure to print your name and address clearly. Then read about $1,000.00 winners like Mrs. Belle Smith of Yakima, Wash. Discover how hundreds of other members cashed in just by doing our puzzles in their spare time. Find out all about this exciting and profitable hobby now. You may receive your first big prize in a few weeks.

AFFIX THIS COUPON TO POSTCARD FOR FAST HANDLING OR MAIL IN ENVELOPE.

PUZZLE LOVERS CLUB Box 2, Prince Street Station, New York City 10012

Gentlemen,

Send me a free copy of your newspaper plus all details on your cash prize contests. I am under absolutely no obligation to pay anything. If I join the Club I may compete for all prizes and spend the cash I win any way I want.

Name_____

Address_____

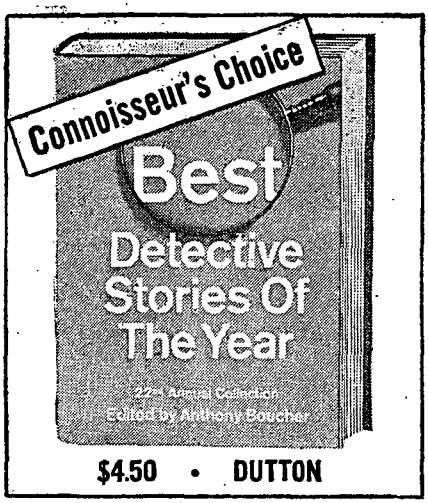
City_____

State_____ Zip_____

14-10

ENJOY YOURSELF IN YOUR OWN HOME AND WIN EXTRA CASH!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



$4.50 • DUTTON

Just Published

How 88,648 Heavy Smokers Stopped Smoking

NEW YORK—The Anti-Tobacco Center of America has just published a booklet which explains how 88,648 heavy smokers (of whom many are physicians) have stopped smoking without straining their will power. This booklet is available free of charge to smokers. All you need do, to obtain it, is to send your name and address to The Anti-Tobacco Center of America, Dept. A-85-K, 366 Fifth Avenue, New York 1, N.Y. This offer is open while the supply of these booklets lasts.

RED MASK MYSTERY

Just out—a new RED MASK MYSTERY

A CRIME OF ONE'S OWN

By Edward Grierson

Author of *The Second Man*

Mayhem, spies and a murder charge trip up an incurably romantic book shop owner when he tries a little "do it yourself" detection. "Grierson seems unable to write less than a classic." — ANTHONY BOUCHER, *N. Y. Times.*

$3.95 at bookstores

PUTNAM

Think small. If you save one person from hunger, you work a miracle. Give to CARE, New York 10016

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S
Mystery Magazine

Pastiche of PHILO VANCE

THE AUSTIN MURDER CASE — Jon L. Breen — 6

SPY STORIES

THE NAME OF THE GAME — Jacob Hay — 18

THE SPY WHO DIDN'T EXIST — Edward D. Hoch — 88

DETECTION and CRIME

THE MAN WHO SAW THE INVISIBLE — John Dickson Carr — 31

THE INTRUDERS — Anthony Gilbert — 46

MORE THAN ONE KIND OF LUCK — Charlotte Armstrong — 67

A QUESTION OF TRANSLATION — G. C. Edmondson — 78

THE ADVENTURE OF THE EGYPTIAN TOMB — Agatha Christie — 99

MISS PHIPPS GOES TO THE HAIRDRESSER — Phyllis Bentley — 119

CHANGE OF CLIMATE — Ursula Curtiss — 137

FILE #1: THE MAYFIELD CASE — Joe Gores — 148

EQMM "FIRST STORY"

NUMBER ONE — John Holt — 111

DOUBLE-CROSS WORD PUZZLE — Norma Schier — 44

HARDCOVERS AND PAPERBACKS OF THE MONTH — 118

BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH — Anthony Boucher — 65

INDEX TO VOLUME FIFTY — 162-161

PUBLISHER: *B. G. Davis* EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: *Ellery Queen*

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Vol. 50, No. 6, Whole No. 289. DEC., 1967. Published monthly by Davis Publications, Inc., at 50c a copy. Annual subscription $6.00 in U.S.A., and possessions and Canada; $7.00 in the Pan American Union; $7.00 in all other countries. Editorial and General Offices, 505 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022. Change of address notices, undeliverable copies, orders for subscriptions, and other mail items are to be sent to 505 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022. Office of Publication—10 Ferry St., Concord, N. H. 03301. Second-Class postage paid at Concord, N. H. *© 1967 by Davis Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in U.S.A.* *Submission must be accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelope; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.*

MPA

JOEL DAVIS, *Assistant Publisher* CLAYTON RAWSON, *Managing Editor*
LEONARD F. PINTO, *Production Director* CONSTANCE DI RIENZO, *Executive Editorial Secretary*
IRVING BERNSTEIN, *Art Director*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a PHILO VANCE pastiche

Fans and aficionados have always regretted that certain famous detectives have appeared only in full-length novels. For examples: S. S. Van Dine never wrote a short story about the sophistic and sophisticated Philo Vance; Earl Derr Biggers never involved the Confucian but not confused Charlie Chan in a short caper; John P. Marquand never put the so-sorry, so-Lorre Mr. Moto into a short memoir; and Dashiell Hammett never gave the wisecracking, casecracking Nick and Nora Charles a short fling. . . . And, alas, it is too late for the original creators to provide us with these anthological gems.

But if we can't have a flawless detective diamond "in the original," perhaps we can have a semiprecious stone. For it appears that Jon L. Breen has set out to facet and mount these semiprecious jewels. Here is his version of an S. S. Van Dine short story about Philo Vance—what might be called "a hitherto undiscovered account of one of Philo Vance's greatest triumphs"; and you will find it fascinating reading —a pastiche with parody touches, every tone and accent the right "McWright," the real "McDine" . . .

CHARACTERS OF THE STORY

PHILO VANCE
JOHN F.-X. MARKHAM
District Attorney of New York County.
JACK AUSTIN
A musical comedy star.
JUDGE PETER HAWLEY
A respected New York jurist.
MOLLY HAWLEY
His red-haired daughter.
ARLETTA BINGHAM
A society vamp.
ROGER KRONERT
A playboy.
GEORGE GRUEN
A Broadway producer.
MONTY BABY
A theatrical agent.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDNA STUYVESANT
A debutante.
ARCHIE BELMONT
An actor.
STITT
The Austin butler.
ERNEST HEATH
Sergeant of the Homicide Bureau.

THE AUSTIN MURDER CASE

by JON L. BREEN

OF ALL THE CURIOUS AND INEXPLICABLE CRIMES THAT CAME TO THE ATTENtion of Philo Vance during the incumbency of his friend John F.-X. Markham as District Attorney of New York County, there is wide disagreement as to which one was the most bizarre, which one permitted the greatest exploitation of his deductive powers. Perhaps because of the brevity of the investigation and the speed with which Vance was able to put his finger on the guilty person, the murder of Jack Austin, or as it was often called in the press, The Talkie Murder Case, has often been ignored in such discussions. But some feel, among them Vance himself, that his exposition of the vital clue in this case was one of the most dazzling strokes of his career.

Our connection with the Austin murder case began, as did so many of Vance's exploits, with a visit from District Attorney Markham. But this time it was not a worried Markham, puzzled over some unfathomable crime, but a more jovial District Attorney, passing along an invitation to a social engagement.

"It's a little masquerade party, Vance, at the home of Jack Austin, a week from Thursday night. He thought that you and Mr. Van Dine, both of whose works he admires very much, would like to come."

"Most ingratiatin' of you to extend the invitation, Markham old chap, but to tell you the truth I don't find the idea altogether thrillin'. I can find better things to do with my time, don't y'know, than to dress up and go to a costume party at the digs of a most annoyin' and irritatin' vaudevillian. Thanks anyway, old dear."

"Mr. Austin will be most disappointed. I dare say you're the only person in the city of New York who would turn down an invitation to Jack Austin's last party before he leaves Manhattan."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Actu'lly leavin' ol' New York? Not altogether distressin' idea, y'know, but may I ask where he's goin'?"

"Hollywood. To make talking pictures."

Vance puffed his *Régie* and sniffed disgustedly. "If one of the talkin' cinema's first accomplishments will be to allow that chap's nasal off-key singin' to be heard by millions of people throughout the world, it's just another proof of the mistake the film industry's makin' in desertin' true cinema." *

"Quite so, Vance. Since you have such an enthusiasm for the silent film, though, perhaps you'll find the party more intriguing than you had at first thought."

"Might I?" rejoined Vance languidly. "And why might that be?"

"Each guest will come as his favorite movie star. I, for instance, am going as Tom Mix. Judge Peter Hawley will be there as Henry B. Walthall. Austin himself will impersonate Charlie Chaplin."

Vance turned to me. " 'Pon my word, Van, it might be an inter'stin' time at that. I have always wanted to become Douglas Fairbanks for an evening, and here an unprecedented opportunity presents itself. Respectin' your desire to remain inconspicuous, we might find a less dynamic star for you to impersonate—Jack Mulhall, Donald Keith, or one of the those chaps." †

"Sporting of you to accept, Vance!" Markham exclaimed. "I'll relay your response to Jack Austin."

A week later Vance and I made our appearance at Jack Austin's stately Manhattan mansion. The first person we met as we entered was Stitt, the Austin butler, who set the tone for the evening's proceedings with his Keystone Kop costume.** As soon as we entered the mansion's immense ballroom, decorated in a motion-picture soundstage motif, Jack Austin himself rushed over to greet us. His costume of battered hat, baggy pants, cane, and old shoes, together with the small moustache and duck-like walk he had affected for the occasion, gave us the sensation that it was Charlie the little tramp himself who cordially held out his hand and said,

*A devotion to the silent film was but another feature of Vance's many-faceted personality. He was the author of *Epistemological Symbolism in the Films of William S. Hart; Elmo Lincoln, the Renaissance Man;* and *Broncho Billy Anderson and Aristotelian Tragedy*—all highly regarded by film scholars.

†We finally settled on Malcolm McGregor.

**Stitt's natural reticence prohibited his playing this role to its best advantage, but some of the other Kop-costumed servants, hired especially for the occasion, presumably from a casting bureau, gave a more uninhibited performance. Additionally, Austin had found a brace of serving men who bore startling resemblances to the comedy duo of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Mr. Vance and Mr. Van Dine! How good of you to come!"

"It's wholly our pleasure, y'know, Mr. Austin," Vance drawled. And, as if further inspired by his surroundings, he leaped over a chair and turned a double somersault with an agility I hardly knew he possessed, as if the Doug Fairbanks Black Pirate regalia gave him an athletic ability he otherwise lacked. Austin and his guests laughed delightedly, particularly a lovely red-haired flapper-type, quite obviously designed to represent the vivacious Clara Bow, with the beauty and personality of the original.

Austin performed the introductions. "Mr. Vance, this is Miss Molly Hawley." Vance smiled and bowed to the waist in the best Fairbanksian manner. "And I am sure you are acquainted with her father, Judge Peter Hawley."

Judge Hawley, a slight, distinguished-looking man of late middle age, was known to both of us. But we hardly recognized him as the judge, he so resembled Henry B. Walthall in his greatest role, that of the Little Colonel in *The Birth of a Nation*.

It occurred to me as we met the other guests how strangely appropriate their costumes were. For example, Arletta Bingham, a society flirt with many broken hearts (and homes) in her wake, was well cast as the vamp Theda Bara. Markham, in white ten-gallon hat and flamboyant cowboy garb, made a perfect Tom Mix. Indeed, much of the same kind of personal magnetism that had made Mix a star had led the voters of New York to put Markham into office.

Sergeant Ernest Heath of the Metropolitan Police, a frequent participant in Vance's previous cases, was among those present, rather surprisingly. In Heath's case no costume was necessary, since he bore an uncanny resemblance to the humorous character actor Eugene Pallette.*

Broadway playboy Roger Kronert impersonated country-boy hero Charles Ray—he appeared at the party in bare feet, blue jeans, checkered shirt, and wide-brimmed straw hat, a fishing pole over his shoulder.† The most amazing and startling figure was struck by Broadway producer George Gruen, known as "the new Flo Ziegfeld." It was appropriate that the creator of incredibly elaborate stage shows should turn up with the most elaborate disguise of all, an incredibly faithful imitation

*The reference here, of course, to the portly Pallette of his later years. The more svelte-figured Pallette, to whose heroics in the French tale of *Intolerance* audiences of 1916 thrilled, would never have been mistaken for the good Sergeant Heath.

†In mid-evening Kronert made a startling costume change, suddenly appearing in full evening dress, thus illustrating the recent change in Ray's screen character from country boy to man-about-town. Kronert's feet remained bare, however, symbolizing the unfortunate Ray's failure to make a completely successful transformation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Lon Chaney's famed Phantom-of-the-Opera makeup, which has precipitated feminine screams of terror in movie houses throughout the world. Aside from the makeup, Gruen's costume consisted of traditional evening dress and an all-enveloping black opera cape.

It was a highly successful evening, made so not only by the inventive clowning of the host but by the astonishing vigor with which Vance threw himself into his swashbuckling role, doing everything like Fairbanks short of swinging from the chandelier. Only on a few occasions, in the early part of the evening, did any discordant notes introduce themselves, but those few incidents certainly foreshadowed the tragedy that was to strike before the gay festivities ran their course. It appeared that while all of the guests were wishing Jack Austin good luck, a few of them were not really on the best of terms with their host.

It was no secret, for one thing, that Arletta Bingham was being summarily cast off by the departing Austin, and Miss Bingham was far more accustomed to rejecting than to being rejected. As the evening wore on, and drink loosened her tongue, her gay veneer began to slip away and a hidden bitterness to show itself.

"You're a big man, aren't you, Jack?" she slurred. "Going to be a big talking, singing, dancing movie-talkie-singie star. Well, ain't that swell?"

"It's such a wonderful thing!" exclaimed Molly Hawley. "To be seen by millions of people all over the world in one performance, where on the stage you can display your talent only to a few hundred at a time."

"I feel it's a great opportunity," said Austin, with feigned humility. "I hope I'm worthy of it."

George Gruen entered the discussion suddenly. He, like Miss Bingham, was beginning to wobble on his feet. "Talking pictures are just a fad, Jack! They'll never catch on with the public. They go to movies to sleep—to be stimulated, they go to the theatre. And talkies will neither stimulate them like the legitimate theatre nor let them rest like the movies. Jack, take my word for it, you're making a terrible mistake."

"If that is so, George, I shall come back to Broadway, and I'm sure you'll be glad to give me a job." Austin drifted away to join another group of guests, and the conversation quickly became more openly bitter.

Arletta Bingham cackled drunkenly, "Broadway forgets fast. In three or four years his name won't mean a thing. He'll be a forgotten has-been. He won't even be able to get a job."

"And you'll still be a living legend in every bed on Broadway," said Roger Kronert, raising his glass in facetious salute. The vamp snarled sullenly and took a gulp of her drink. As Kronert passed, she aimed at his bare toes with a vicious thrust of her heel and narrowly missed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George Gruen was talking to his drink more than to those around him. "He's a welsher, that Jack Austin. He's a dirty welsher."

"Come, come, George," replied Monty Baby, a well-known Broadway agent, wearing the familiar hat, vest, and glum expression of Buster Keaton. "You let him out of his contract like a gentleman. Why spoil it now?"

"He had no right," the quasi-Opera Phantom moaned. "He's a welsher. He wants to ruin me on Broadway." It was well-known that with so many of Broadway's top stars heading west, Gruen was having trouble finding a star for his new show, reportedly a weak vehicle that would take the artistry of an Al Jolson, an Eddie Cantor, a George Jessel, or a Jack Austin to put it across. Austin's leaving the cast had been a well-publicized blow to the producer, but Gruen had been very sporting about it—at least in the theatrical pages.

Another bad moment came when one of the waiters, elaborately moustached in the manner of lead-Kop Ford Sterling, spilled a tray of drinks on Jack Austin. It was a comical incident, as the waiter's fumbling and Austin's reaction had the style of a well-planned Hollywood "sight gag." However, it soon became clear the incident was not planned and Austin was surprisingly angered by it. "You idiot!" he said between clenched teeth. "Get out of here!"

"But, Mr. Austin—" the unfortunate servant began.

"Get out of here!" Austin iterated. Then he virtually chased the serving man back toward the kitchen. Recovering his composure, he returned to his guests in the comical tramp walk.

"What a temper," said a startled Clara-Molly Bow-Hawley, who had been looking on in shock.

Another young woman, dressed in the homely garb of the perpetual ingenue Mary Pickford, replied, "You needn't know Jack Austin long to find out about that. I know. I loved him. Once."

Shortly, the latter-mentioned lady, a New York debutante named Edna Stuyvesant, was cavorting with Vance and Austin in a manner reminiscent of the United Artists partners, Pickford, Chaplin, and Fairbanks.* This entertainment served to get the party back to its previous quotient of merriment, and it remained so until eleven o'clock.

At that hour, with most of the guests at the height of their enjoyment and many of them more-or-less intoxicated, it was suddenly realized that their host had not put in an appearance for some time.

*The fourth partner, D. W. Griffith, was not represented at the party. It was hoped that Griffith himself might be present, but the motion-picture pioneer had sent his regrets at the last moment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What can have happened to him?" asked Molly Hawley.

"He's dropped out of sight," Roger Kronert observed.

"I remember him steppin' into the library around nine-thirty, and I don't believe I've seen the boy since," said Vance. "I'll see if he's become ill or something." And he strode toward the door of the library, hurdling the huge punch bowl on his way. Markham, Heath, Stitt the butler, several other guests, and I followed him, though walking around the punch bowl. What we saw when Vance opened the library door was enough to bring the festivities of the evening to an abrupt halt.

Jack Austin lay dead on the floor of the library, near the fireplace. His tramp costume was covered with blood, his Chaplinesque moustache pitifully askew. He had seemingly been stabbed several times, and the apparent weapon, an ornately chased Oriental letter opener, lay near the body.*

"He's done away with himself," said Roger Kronert.

"Quite impossible, old chap, judging from the placement and multiplicity of the wounds," said Vance.

"Then he's been murdered!" exclaimed Sergeant Heath.

"Deucedly penetratin', Sergeant."

"Who could have done this?" Judge Hawley whispered.

"Virtually anyone here, I should think," replied Markham grimly.

"Or an outsider," offered Heath, indicating the open window.

"It must have been a prowler," Hawley said shakily.

Vance, kneeling beside the body, had made a discovery. "I think the old boy's tryin' to tell us something, Markham. Look at what he's clutchin' in his right hand."

"A pair of cheaters!" exclaimed Heath.

"But Austin didn't wear eyeglasses," said Judge Hawley.

"You'll notice," said Vance, "that they are of the large, round type affected by the motion-picture comedian Harold Lloyd. If one of the guests here to-night had come as Harold Lloyd, we might regard this as a most rewardin' clue to the miscreant's identity. However, I don't recall anyone wearin' such a costume."

Stitt, the butler, suddenly spoke up. "Harold Lloyd sent his regrets, sir. He could not come."

Vance rose. "Ah. Then there was to be a Harold Lloyd here to-night?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Archie Belmont."

*Vance had several penetrating observations to make about the origin, design, and artistic merits of the weapon. Were this a full-length novel, I would reproduce those remarks here, since they would undoubtedly be of interest to collectors. Unfortunately, the short-story form offers less latitude for the introduction of such peripheral matters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The name brought several gasps from the group. All the guests, suddenly sober, were now gathered around the body.

"Why, he hated Jack!" Arletta Bingham exclaimed.

Roger Kronert supported this contention. "He was supposed to get the part in that talkie they signed Jack Austin for. He hated Austin's guts."

"Seems a likely suspect, Vance," Markham said.

"It's possible," Vance murmured.

"Open and shut, if you ask me," said Heath. "I'll call the lab boys. Show's over now, folks," he added, dispersing the crowd. "Let's give this corpse some air."

"Vance and I will have to talk to this fellow Belmont, see what sort of alibi he has," said Markham. "You can hold the fort here, Heath. We'll want to question everyone later, so no one may leave."

Several protests came from the assembled guests.

"Save your breath, folks!" Heath said. "This is a murder investigation. It's not a party no more."

"In that case, Mr. D.A.," said Arletta Bingham tauntingly, "hadn't you better get out of that cowboy outfit before you carry this any further?"

And suddenly we all realized how absurd we looked. Markham in his Tom Mix regalia, Vance in his Black Pirate apparel, Judge Hawley in a Confederate Civil War uniform, Roger Kronert barefoot in a tuxedo, Gruen in his opera cape and hideous makeup. With all merriment vanished, we looked rather pathetic and comic and even, taken in conjunction with the brutally murdered little tramp figure, somewhat terrifying.

I shall never forget that macabre scene. With Austin's murder, Charlie Chaplin, Doug Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Buster Keaton had all vanished, leaving only their outward habiliments behind. All of their merry spirit was washed away by the destructive tide of violent, unanticipated death.

"Yes," said Markham, "I think we should change into street clothes. Inconveniently, Mr. Vance, Mr. Van Dine, and I all arrived in costume, but I think those of you who donned your costumes here could be allowed to change. Then, Sergeant Heath will want to take your statements. Carry on, Heath."

"But, Mr. Markham, if you leave now, you'll miss Doc Doremus."*

"So we will. Well, if he says anything really funny, write it down. Mr. Van Dine may be able to use it in a footnote."†

Stitt provided us with Belmont's address, a plush Park Avenue apartment, and soon Vance, Markham, and I were in a taxicab on our way

*The Chief Medical Examiner, who had figured in several of Vance's previous cases.
†He said nothing worth footnoting on this occasion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there, glad to leave the horror of deflated dreams behind us at the now-somber Austin mansion.

"All that blood," Markham, still in the all-white uniform of a wild west "good guy," was saying, "The murderer had to be spattered with it, Vance! And so I don't see how it could be someone who was at the party. Any of them could have slipped into the library unseen, but how could they have gotten out and rejoined the party without being covered with enough blood to give them away to the other guests?"

Vance did not attempt to answer the question.

"I'm sure Belmont is our man, Vance. It appears the simple, uncomplicated product of a diseased, insane, vengeful mind. Don't you agree?"

Vance said sorrowfully, "Markham, old dear, I make it a practice not to jump to conclusions about people whose psyches I have not probed. Belmont may prove to be psychologically incapable of this murder. I will know soon enough."

Markham snorted. "If you had to present a case to a jury, Vance, you'd be more interested in hard-core evidence."

"Quite so, but I am an amateur in crime detection. Once I find a murderer, I have no taste for mountin' him in a big album like a prize postage stamp. I'm not int'rested, y'know, in your stupid courts and your silly rules of evidence. That's your department, my dear chap, and the people of New York pay you handsomely for it."

Markham grunted in reply. That was the extent of our conversation en route to Belmont's quarters.

We found Belmont at home alone. He greeted us affably enough. At first glance, it seemed unlikely he had been out that evening. He appeared to all the world like a man spending a quiet evening at home.

"We expected to see you at Jack Austin's party to-night, Mr. Belmont," said Markham.

"What a bore that would have been! He sent over a costume for me to wear—a Harold Lloyd getup. I sent my regrets. I hope I never see that ham again."

"You probably won't," remarked Markham heavily. "Have you sent the costume back?"

"No, it's still here. Why? What's this all about?"

"May we see the costume, please?"

"Yes, of course. What's happened anyway?"

"Jack Austin was murdered to-night, Mr. Belmont. He had a pair of Harold Lloyd glasses clutched in his hand when we found him."

Belmont looked up with a start. "Murdered? Say, you surely can't think that I—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We understand that you hated Jack Austin because he was chosen for that part in the talkie picture."

Belmont laughed. "Look, that's one of those things that happen. It would have been a great opportunity for me, but I've lost parts before. I was disappointed, but I'd hardly commit murder over it. As for hating Austin, I'll admit I was no fan of his. He was an insufferable egotist, an impossible man to work with, and an utter cad, a one-hundred per cent wretch. Whoever killed him deserves a medal. But I am not the man."

"Mightn't you get that part now that he's dead?" inquired Markham.

"A possibility. But it hadn't occurred to me until you just mentioned it."

Markham's expression indicated he doubted the statement. In the meantime, Belmont had found the box the costume had come in. The familiar Harold Lloyd glasses, however, were absent.

"I don't understand it," muttered Belmont. "I must have mislaid them."

"Perhaps you mislaid them at Jack Austin's home, Mr. Belmont. Perhaps, during your struggle, he grabbed them off your very nose."

"Mr. Markham, why would I wear the Harold Lloyd costume at all, if I wasn't even going to the party? That doesn't make any sense!"

"I don't pretend to understand the mind of a cold-blooded murderer. Mr. Belmont, by the authority vested in me by the people of New York County, I arrest you for the murder of Jack Austin and remind you that anything you say may be used against you."

"Tut! Tut! Markham,"* said Vance softly. These were the only words he uttered while we were in Belmont's apartment. They were enough to show Markham that Vance felt the District Attorney was proceeding too hastily, and Markham seemed uneasy after the arrest was made.

Back at the Austin mansion, we found that Heath had been hard at work taking statements from the guests.

"I think they can go home now, don't you, Vance?" Markham said hopefully. "I imagine we can consider this investigation as good as closed."

"Not quite, Markham," Vance replied. "I am not convinced that Mr. Belmont is psychologically capable—"

"Psychology again!" Heath exclaimed disgustedly. "Mr. Vance, I know you've done some good work in the past, but you can't take every case like it's a page out of—who's the fellow?"

"Freud, you mean? My dear Heath, a psychological approach is suitable to any problem of crime. And there are other people far more psychologically capable of committing this crime, people in this house now."

*Egyptology was yet another of Vance's many so-called "dilettante" interests.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Before the discussion could continue, Stitt approached us, still ludicrously dressed as one of Mack Sennett's Keystone Kops. "Mr. Vance," he said stiffly, "I think there is something you should know."

"What is that?"

"Those glasses that Mr. Austin had in his hand are not the same pair that were sent to Mr. Belmont."

"They weren't, eh? Then there were two pairs?"

"Yes. The pair that Mr. Austin had in his hand were given him by Mr. Harold Lloyd himself. They occupied an honored place on the mantelpiece in the library."

"I see. Then they were always here, not brought in by someone from outside. That puts a pos'tively different light on matters, y'know. He grasped 'em not from the nose of his murderer, as Mr. Markham has postulated, but from the mantelpiece."

"In an effort to tell us the murderer's identity," said Markham.

"Quite so. Changes matters a bit, eh what?"

Markham appeared exasperated. "But, Vance, I honestly don't see how this development changes anything. I still would put the same interpretation on the clue, wouldn't you? That is, as an indication of the guilt of the man who was to impersonate Harold Lloyd—that is, Archie Belmont."

"No, indeed, Markham. Austin's message to us is a bit more subtle than that. In fact, I might not have been able to read it, had I not linked it with a couple of other pertinent clues."

"Do I understand you to mean, Vance," demanded Markham, seeming near apoplexy, "that you claim to have solved this case?"

"Oh, quite, old chap."

"And Belmont is not the murderer in your redoubtable estimation?"

" 'Fraid not, old boy."

"Then who did it?" demanded Heath.

"Gather the guests in the ballroom and I'll tell you all about it," Vance promised, puffing his *Régie* nonchalantly.

Markham complied, though too upset to speak above a strangled whisper. A few moments later, Vance was telling the assembled group, "A most entertainin' comedy, y'know. I rather fancy it would make a fine picture, non-talkin' of course. Archie Belmont, who somehow mislaid his big round glasses, was accused of a crime in which his big round glasses didn't really figure at all. Amusin', what? Quite so."

Few of the tense gathering appeared very amused. In strained silence, they hung on Vance's every syllable.

"It's all extr'ordin'rily simple. y'see. The real murderer is here, among

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the people in this room. A person capable of bitterness and vindictive hatred. One capable of plannin' a darin' and complicated crime."

He paused dramatically and looked at each face in turn—the pale, beautiful visage of Molly Hawley; the ashen, haggard face of Judge Hawley, her father; the handsome, uncharacteristically serious face of Roger Kronert; the scowl of George Gruen, his Lon Chaney makeup removed; the sneering, now unlovely features of Arletta Bingham; the impassive countenance of the butler, Stitt.

Which of these was guilty, we all wondered—all but the one who knew.

"The murderer was one whose costume allowed him to cover up any annoyin' blood with which he might have been spattered—cover it up with a handy black opera cape!" Suddenly, all eyes were on George Gruen, who began to rise out of his chair but thought better of it when he felt Heath's beefy hand on his shoulder. "A man who hated Jack Austin for leavin' him on the brink of financial disaster. A man who is noted on Broadway for colossally elaborate musical productions with countless chorus girls and expensive, intricate sets, a producer of—in short—*spectacles!*"

With breathtaking suddenness, Gruen produced a dagger from under his cloak and plunged it into his own heart. The drama was over.

And so ended the famous Austin murder case. To me, I confess, it is more memorable than any of Vance's other cases—and for reasons apart from Vance's great detective skill.

Though you may have difficulty in believing it, we were men, Vance and I, not mere cardboard figures. I admit here for the first time that during the course of this investigation I fell in love for the only time in my life—in love with Miss Molly Hawley, the judge's red-haired daughter. Of course, I could say nothing, for to do so would be to break one of my own rules.*

I could have composed long paragraphs celebrating her Titian locks, her flawless white teeth, her dimpled cheeks, but I had long ago vowed never to lose my equanimity in the manner of Dr. Watson and other narrators of detective tales who have allowed themselves such indulgences as romance.

By being true to the rules, I consigned myself to a life of loneliness. And seeing every Clara Bow movie I possibly can has not significantly abated that loneliness.

*S. S. Van Dine's "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories," Rule Number 3: "There must be no love interest in the story."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a NEW story by JACOB HAY

A fascinating new spy story by Jacob Hay, and one of the most unusual stories of espionage we have ever published . . . Have you ever heard of Usagrad? It is thousands of miles from USA, but there are ways of annihilating space . . .

THE NAME OF THE GAME

by JACOB HAY

SUBJECT: Grovanov Investigation
TO: Special Agent-in-Charge, F.B.I. office, Baltimore
FROM: F. C. Saunders, Agent

Attached is transcript of statement of Semyon Alexeivitch Grovanov, alias John G. MacLean. Subject was forewarned of his legal rights and his attorney was present when the statement was made.

F. C. Saunders, Agent

I, Semyon Alexeivitch Grovanov, make this statement freely and voluntarily, without duress and in the presence of my legal counsel, Walter G. Owings, at Baltimore, Md., March 21st, 196-, to Agent F. C. Saunders, Federal Bureau of Investigation. I also state that I have been given no promises of immunity from prosecution by State or Federal authorities.

You know, of course, that I am a Ukrainian. You are familiar with our history. A Ukrainian army under General Vlassov even fought under the Germans to set us free in the second World War: that's how far we were prepared to go for our independence, our freedom from Russia.

I was a teen-ager in those years, so I remember how it was later. The Russians did not forget our General Vlassov, and if the German occupation had been terrible, the Russian return was even more terrible. In my own home town of Steblev, as it happened all over the Ukraine, they took hundreds of us from our families—we were not yet "corrupted" it seems—and shipped us, like cattle, to "re-education" settlements in the Urals.

It was made quite clear to us that if we wanted to survive we would become good Communists. I wanted very much to survive. I became a very good Communist, so good that I was selected to attend advanced training classes, almost the equivalent of a course at a university. That much I owe the Russians. Without boasting, I can say that I showed a special aptitude for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

languages. I have already said that I became a good Communist, and in this I was sincere. I saw the truth in their arguments that Vlassov was really a traitor and deserved to be executed. I saw that Russia could only be truly great if all her peoples were united. I saw myself at work in some great Moscow publishing house, translating capitalist propaganda and exposing it as a pack of filthy lies.

But translation, they told me, can be done by any fool with a couple of dictionaries. With your ability in languages, you could serve your country far better in other fields. What fields? I asked. Perhaps abroad, they replied.

So, in time, I came to Usagrad.

We were forbidden to call it Usagrad, of course. Our name for it was Middle City. This was the most advanced school of all, located deep in the Urals and surrounded by a belt of uninhabited land strongly patrolled by security police.

Middle City was—and for all I know still is—a perfect reproduction of an American small town. Its permanent residents were our "faculty," and, like us students, they were forbidden to speak any language but American English. The supermarket stocked nothing but American goods; the newsstands carried nothing but American newspapers, magazines, and paperbacks. The juke boxes in the cocktail lounges played the latest pop records, and on our closed-circuit television sets we watched the latest American situation-comedies.

In the course of a year in Middle City we moved through all the social strata, beginning in the slums—oh, yes, Middle City had a slum district as squalid as it could be made—and arrived eventually to Mountain Vale, the exclusive suburban district, with eligibility for membership in the Mountain Vale Country Club. The senior students were very smug about their club and enjoyed looking down their noses at us "slummies," as new arrivals were called.

When you were "graduated" from the slum district to the middle-income group, you were given a small American car to drive. The Mountain Vale people drove Cadillacs. But first you had to "buy" it. And always there would be something wrong with it, purposely. When you took it back for repairs, the "salesman" would point out a clause in fine print in the guarantee that voided his responsibility.

In the slums we lived on "welfare handouts": dried milk, beans, peanut butter, salt pork, and the like. In Middle Income we bought at the supermarket.

You learned fast to count your change. It was a point of honor for the staff to cheat you if they could, overcharging or short-changing. If you bought a pound of hamburger and took it home and weighed it,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you always found you'd paid a pound's price for 14 ounces.

For the new arrivals, by far the biggest shocker was the newsstand in the lobby of Hotel Middle City at the corner of Main and Market Streets. We students could use the dining room and cocktail lounges, but the guest rooms were reserved for visiting big shots from Moscow. But that newsstand! Nothing but girlie magazines and sexy paperbacks with titles like *Lust Club,* or *Perverted Sinners.*

"This is the sort of country in which some of you here will be asked to serve," our senior instructor would tell us at our weekly "Progress" meetings. "You must expect to find hypocrisy, cheating, dishonesty, and immorality wherever you turn, and you must not be surprised when you find it. You must not even resent it or be disgusted by it. You will accept it cheerfully and without question."

I was introduced to Anya Pavlovna Koronski at a cocktail party on the terrace of the Mountain Vale Country Club a few weeks after I moved to the Upper Income Group. My first job as a slummie was as a gas-station attendant. From there I had moved to assistant manager of the second-largest supermarket. In Upper Income I was theoretically employed as an advertising executive.

"Anne Browning, this is Jack MacLean," our host made the introductions, using our school names. I found myself looking at a small, dark, lovely girl in a white piqué cocktail dress, and getting an interested response from her brown eyes.

"Hi," she said. "Welcome to the club."

"Can I get you a drink?" I asked. She nodded. "What kind?"

"Bourbon Old-Fashioned," she said. I motioned for a waiter.

"Where are you from, Anne Browning?"

"Baahstun," she replied, giggling. "And you, Mr. MacLean?"

"Philly," I told her, grinning back. "But seriously—"

"You know we're not supposed to talk about that," she reminded me solemnly as our waiter, a recently arrived slummie, came for our order.

"And make it snappy," I told the waiter. Slummies needed to be reminded of their inferior position in Middle City's social scale. He scowled and left.

"Where were we?" Anne asked. I told her. "Leningrad, if you must know," she said, pouting. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the Upper Income Senior Instructor watching us closely and, it seemed to me, approvingly. He drifted over.

"Hi, Mac," he said, joviality itself. "How's it going? I see you've met the prettiest gal in Middle City already." Anne blushed attractively. "What's new in your shop?" Comrad Gladushkin went on.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, the usual. Sometimes I wonder how in God's name people believe the guff we turn out. They'll swallow anything."

"As long as it sells soap, so what?"

In any event, such was the beginning of what I thought of only as a kind of college romance that would last for as long as our studies in Middle City. I took Anne to a couple of John Wayne Westerns at the Capitol, and we spent quite a few evenings in the Colonial Tavern at the Hotel, drinking Martinis and Bourbon Old-Fashioneds in American Revolutionary War surroundings, complete to a couple of crossed long rifles over the mantelpiece of the brick fireplace.

"What did you do today?" Anne asked me one evening.

"Believe it or not, I was the Mayor today," I told her. "What were you?"

"Jury duty," she said wearily. "God, what a mockery."

I should explain here that in addition to our regular "jobs," we also "administered" Middle City, taking at various times most of the positions required for a normal city government. Much better than textbook courses, or dreary lectures on the procedures of Anglo-Saxon law and its absurd contention that the accused is innocent until proved guilty.

By the tenth month of our year in Middle City all of us had a pretty fair idea of the work we would be assigned to do. It would be, of course, a voluntary affair, and I was looking forward to it keenly; but I noticed that quite a few familiar faces had vanished from the bar of the Mountain Vale Country Club. Sam Johnson had gone, and with him Hal Combs, Bill Worthington, and Stan Brewster.

"They're no loss," was Anne's comment when I mentioned their absence. "Let them spend the rest of their lives grubbing out translations from the Scandinavian."

My own formal interrogation took place late in November before a board made up of the Senior Instructors and a General of the Red Army from Moscow, all in full military uniform. My dossier lay open before the General when I entered the room in City Hall normally used for City Council meetings. I stood at attention before the long table. The General looked at my dossier and then at me, and smiled genially.

"Please be at ease, Comrade Grovanov. I see by your record that you are one of Comrade Colonel Gladushkin's star pupils." It was the first time I'd heard my real name used since my arrival in Middle City. "So," the General resumed, still cordial, "your government has not wasted the thousands and thousands of rubles it has cost to train you for your future assignments."

"I hope not, Comrade General," I replied.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And you are quite willing to accept an overseas assignment on a long-term basis? Perhaps a very long term, indeed?"

"I am, Comrade General." After all, what did I have to go back to in the Ukraine? My parents had died in one of the purges that had "cleansed" my homeland of treason. My sister had married and moved to Kiev. So why not?

It was then I learned my future. I was to become what is known to intelligence services as an "agent in place," with the rank of Lieutenant in the Red Army. I would go to the United States and settle in a community and have absolutely no contact with anything even remotely connected with the Soviet Government, and most especially with the American Communist Party and any of its cover or "front" organizations. My Army pay would be banked for me in Moscow. Initial expenses would be covered by a $10,000 account to be opened in the name of John G. MacLean in the Royal Bank of Toronto, Canada.

"At the right time, when your Motherland needs you, you will be called upon to act on the instructions you receive," the General concluded. "Congratulations and good luck in America, Comrade Grovanov."

But it was Comrade Colonel Gladushkin who had the big surprise waiting for me in his office after my interview. It was Anya Koronski, now Anne Browning of Boston, looking very solemn.

We were to be Mr. and Mrs. John G. MacLean!

Anne's job would be, in effect, that of my courier.

"A housewife can go to New York, say, on a shopping trip," Gladushkin explained. "If she should happen to meet an old friend for lunch, who would comment? Or, it may be that the mission you will be assigned to will require that you send information to us. Comrade Koronski will be your means, your channel of communications."

So, ten years ago, Anne and I arrived at our assigned post, Baltimore, with our superbly forged Canadian passports and several heartily enthusiastic letters of reference from my former employers stating their regret at my departure and their admiration for my work as an advertising copy writer in Toronto and Montreal. Before we had left Russia, Anne and I had gone through the formalities of a civil wedding, and since we were both young and healthy and with all the proper instincts—well, we found that being man and wife was a very pleasurable duty.

We managed to find a very comfortable, if small, apartment in the Northwood section of the city, and I was slightly disappointed at my inability to find anything in the fine print of the lease that aroused my suspicions. I say "small" apartment

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

now, but when we first moved in, Anne and I were ecstatic at all the space we had. It was unbelievable that just two people could have so much room, even after our stay in Middle City.

And I landed a job at Farrar, Webster & York Associates with the modest title of Junior Copy Writer. My immediate supervisor was a tall lanky Virginian named Owen Harrington, to whom I took a liking my first day at work. The first account to which I was assigned was what Owen called his "writes-itself bit" for a company which manufactured skis, of all unlikely things.

"They just can't be that good," I told Owen after I'd gone through the folders containing the previous and current campaigns. Owen grinned and pushed his horn-rimmed glasses up on his forehead.

"The pure hell of it is, they are," he said. "They're not well known yet, but when the ski crowd finds out how good they really are, that little outfit is going to explode. You're a Canuck, Mac; you ski?"

"Some," I said truthfully. As a matter of fact, I was an excellent skier.

"Well, I can't prove it to you in this weather, but come winter we'll get you a pair of Treads and you'll see what I'm talking about. Hell, I'd get even more flowery, but Old Man Tread won't let me. Keep it down, he keeps saying."

"A real oddball, huh?"

"No." Owen grew serious. "He's right. Lay it on too thick and the audience will spot a phony, as you well know."

But I knew equally well that those skis could never be that good. However, it was what I was getting paid for.

On the strength of Owen's increasing approval of my work I bought Anne and me a car. Of course there was still quite a lot of money in the Toronto account, but we felt it would be wise to leave a strong balance in case of an emergency. On week-ends we took long drives, sometimes to the Eastern Shore to the south, sometimes northward into the Pennsylvania Dutch countryside, and it was only on these drives that we discussed such things as politics and the decadence of America generally.

Anne never failed to point out the shanties that the Eastern Shore farmers put up for migrant farm workers, and she insisted, even though it was out of our way, that we finish each week-end trip with a cruise through one or another of Baltimore's slum districts. As a matter of professional principle, we spoke no Russian on these trips. The danger was—well, to give you an example: suppose I tripped over a carpet at a cocktail party, spilled my drink, fell on my face, and came up cursing in Russian?

Apart from her insistence on pointing out the less pleasing aspects of America, Anne became, I felt, quite assimilated, even to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

point of confessing to me, with a rueful grin, that she had yet to be short-changed or overcharged at the huge supermarket we patronized.

That winter Owen had the Tread Ski people send me a couple of sets of their product, and Anne and I went out to Western Maryland and the mountains to try them out. They were, to put it mildly, fantastically good—better, as Owen had declared, than even our glowing prose described them. By that time I was writing copy for several other accounts, and the first of the year I got a completely unexpected raise, and a promotion to Senior Copy Writer. I was embarrased by the promotion.

"What about Lassiter?" I asked Owen. "He's been here at least two years longer and has seniority."

"You're doing a better job than Lassiter," was Owen's blunt reply. "That's the name of the game."

"But Lassiter's Mr. Farrar's nephew?"

"So?" Owen Harrington raised an eyebrow. "Listen, Mac, a year ago the firm 'volunteered' Bob Lassiter's services to the United Fund Drive. We didn't get a damn' nickel out of the deal, and we lost Lassiter's work for a couple of months, because, my boy, Old Man Farrar felt it was our 'corporate responsibility.' But Lassiter goofed off. This year we 'volunteered' you, and you turned out some good, hard-hitting copy. You observed, and you learned, and you didn't goof off because it wasn't a paying account. You accepted responsibility for the firm's responsibility. It's as simple as that."

I was, indeed, observing and learning.

And I remembered that Comrade Colonel Gladushkin was the nephew of a member of the Supreme Presidium. He had been assigned to posts in Ottawa and Washington, and with our United Nations delegation in New York—three of the most desirable posts in the world. There had been a slight scandal in Ottawa, I remembered—something to do with the wife of a Belgian diplomat; and in Washington, or so gossip at Middle City had it, the newspapers had dubbed him the "Rushin' Russian" for the number of speeding tickets he had been able to ignore, thanks to his diplomatic immunity.

I wondered whether Colonel Gladushkin would have succeeded to his present plush job if his uncle had not been a member of the Supreme Presidium.

Owen took me out to dinner that evening in celebration. He ordered a vodka Martini. "Ever sampled the stuff?" he asked.

"I think," I replied slowly, "I'll stick to gin."

Once every three months Anne went on a "shopping spree" to some nearby city—sometimes to Philadelphia, less often to New York (on my salary at that time too fre-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quent "sprees" to an expensive place like New York might have aroused comment), never to Washington, and most often to some smaller Pennsylvania city like York or Lancaster. We would receive an unmarked envelope; inside it, a slip of paper would note the time and place of rendezvous.

Invariably Anne returned from these trips with the single word, "Nothing."

The following spring the twins were born. Earlier our contact had advised us it would appear more American if we began a family. Their birth certificates stated that their names were John Gerald MacLean, Jr., and William Henry MacLean; but privately, Anne and I thought of them as Ivan Semyonovitch and Pavel (after Anya's father) Semyonovitch.

Following their birth, our contact told Anne that our government was much pleased and that in view of this additional responsibility I had been jumped one grade to the rank of Major, while Anne had been promoted from Junior to Senior Lieutenant of the Red Army. It was quite cheering to think of all our pay piling up in the State Bank in Moscow.

Owen had been right about Tread Skis. In the next couple of years, assisted, we liked to think, by our advertisements, they caught on tremendously. Several of our other accounts expanded their budgets as well, and Owen was moved up to the position of Vice President in Charge of Copy Writing. I saw the formal letter from Mr. Farrar, announcing the promotion, on the bulletin board by the entrance to what we called "Copy Alley" on the day it took effect. I went immediately to Owen's office to congratulate him, and found him clearing out his desk and files.

"Can a cat look at a king?" I asked at the door. "Congratulations, Owen. They couldn't have picked a better man." Owen turned from a tall filing cabinet and gave me a broad smile.

"You'd better straighten up and fly right, Mac," he said. "I'm going to run a mighty taut ship."

"Yes, sir," I said, coming to attention and throwing him a mock British salute, all side-arm and hand-a-quiver. "I'll tell the new man when I see him."

"He's just been told," Owen laughed, and motioned toward his cluttered desk. "Try it for size."

My new rank brought me true capitalistic status, for I was now entitled to participate in the firm's stock-option program and become a bona-fide shareholder in the corporation of Farrar, Webster & York Associates.

"Why not?" Anne asked when we took a drive in the country to discuss it. "There's no risk, and with the money we'll have when we go home . . ." We never discussed such things in the new split-level we'd decided to buy out in a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

development in Dulaney Valley; it is too simple to bug a new house. And we'd traded in our first car for a really dashing convertible, much more in keeping with a rising young advertising executive. Its V-8 engine was infinitely more satisfying on the open road than the little six had been.

The years went by almost before we were aware of it, and suddenly the twins were in kindergarten and then in first grade, and Anne and I found ourselves attending P.T.A. meetings. In due course I rose to Lieutenant Colonel and Anne to Captain, and by this time we had enough in our Moscow account to buy a little Moscva four when we got home, and even be able to afford a three-room flat in one of the new apartment developments whose pictures we kept seeing in *Life* and *Look*.

During these years, too, Anne took a deep satisfaction in the agonies of integration through which the United States was painfully picking its uncertain way. I confess, though, that I was secretly amused when Billy came home to tell us that a little Negro girl had been assigned the desk next to his in his third-grade classroom. Anne was shocked, and it took all my persuasion to keep her from going to the school and protesting.

"Bear in mind that the Africans are our brothers," I told her after the boys had been sent off to bed.

"Jungle creatures," Anne sniffed.

In due time Farrar, Webster & York Associates became the largest advertising agency between Philadelphia and Atlanta, and my stock in the firm had increased its worth at least threefold. Our national accounts now included some multi-million-dollar billings. And Owen Harrington retired.

"Owen Harrington was the finest copy man I've ever known," Mr. York, who'd taken over from Mr. Farrar, told me in his big luxuriously furnished office the day before Owen announced his intentions. "And Owen trained you, Mac. You think you're ready to continue following in his footsteps?"

That night I took Anne out to a bang-up dinner at Marconi's, Baltimore's closest approach to a French restaurant. Me, Semyon Alexeivitch Grovanov, Vice President in Charge of Copy Writing, of Farrar, Webster & York, Associates. Middle City had done its job well.

But Anne was worried about the twins. They seemed to be doing very well in school, I thought, although I couldn't begin to understand some of the new American teaching methods.

"It's time they learned to speak Russian," Anne would insist. "And the distortions they hear in school about Comrade Khrushchev."

I swung our Cadillac out and around a lumbering truck on Interstate 95. "We seem to have heard a few distortions about Comrade

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stalin," I reminded her quietly. She had no ready reply.

"Listen," I went on, "they're smart boys, Anne. They'll have no trouble learning Russian, no more than the Armenian kids who come to study in Leningrad."

"They'll still have an American accent, like a couple of foreigners."

"From what I read, our teenagers back home are all trying to make like Americans anyway. They should fit in nicely."

"Let's just drop it, shall we?" Anne suggested.

I glanced across at her. She was still as attractively pretty as the day we had been married, but there were now little lines of bitterness at the corners of her mouth, and I thought I knew why they were there.

"You're thinking we should be up there?" I motioned toward the cloudless blue sky where, somewhere over the Earth, Voskhod I was hurtling Comrade Yuri Gagarin through space. "Not just sitting around, doing nothing."

"At least back home they're doing something for Russia. Here we sit, fat and dumb. And waiting. For what?"

For what?

I asked myself that question for the next couple of years.

Then, two months ago, the answer came with Anne's return from a Christmas shopping expedition to Philadelphia. I knew it the instant she came in from putting the station wagon in the garage; her cheeks were glowing, her eyes sparkled, and she was more vividly alive than she had been in years. The twins hadn't yet come home from their last day in school before the Christmas vacation, and our house was bright with holiday decorations.

"At last!" Anne said.

"My study," I said quickly. This was a perfectly soundproof room I'd had built in the cellar, using part of the so-called "family" room, where I could work late when business piled up at the office. I had checked it out myself thoroughly, and knew positively that it was not bugged.

We went downstairs and I sat down behind my desk. To my astonishment, Anne drew herself to attention and gave me a Russian military salute. I grinned, but she was in deadly earnest.

"Comrade Colonel," she said formally, and extended toward me a plain manila envelope. "I have the honor to deliver your instructions from High Headquarters of our Service."

"Now, really, Anne—" I began to say, accepting the envelope.

She cut me short with another "Comrade Colonel," clipped and angry.

I read the contents of the manila envelope. They were fantastic. They were totally unreal. As a Russian officer I had expected, and was prepared, to carry out, when the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

time came, espionage and sabotage; but this was a cold-blooded, senseless murder.

"In the view of our U.S. Planning Staff, internal division among the population is at an all-time critical point," I read. "There is dissension over the involvement in South Vietnam, and over civil rights at home. There is the growing power and, concomitantly, growing distrust of the reactionary far-right movement. Coupled with this are rising complaints about the costs of the American manned-space program. The country is at a flash point."

And I would be the spark.

It was hellishly simple and, at first glance, would be hellishly effective.

On March 19 the City of Baltimore would welcome home Astronaut Marshall Hopkins, fresh from his flight aboard Gemini 8-A, which had completed the experiments planned for the interrupted Gemini 8. There would be a ticker-tape parade and a reception before City Hall, with the Governor of Maryland and the Mayor of Baltimore on hand.

When Lieutenant Colonel Hopkins came to the microphone to accept the city's gratitude, I was to step out of the crowd and shoot him dead. After which I would give myself up to the police.

My reasons for shooting the astronaut would be those of the extreme right. I was a fanatic patriot, and the shooting was my way of protesting the diversion of funds from "our boys" in Vietnam to the space program. There was also the fact that Lieutenant Colonel Hopkins was a Negro, the first of his race to have been chosen as an astronaut.

"You know what's in here?" I asked Anne, my voice unsteady.

"Of course, Comrade Colonel. A glorious opportunity!"

I read on. Following the assassination, Anne and the twins would, naturally, go into seclusion. They would announce their intention of visiting her family in Boston and leave our house. In Philadelphia they would be intercepted by friends who would see to it that their journey ended in Moscow.

"Doesn't seem to leave much of a future for me, does it?" I asked Anne. Her lip curled, her tone became contemptuous.

"That, too, has been arranged. We hold the chief of American intelligence for Eastern Europe. At the proper time an exchange will be arranged. Rest assured that the American government will keep the whole matter secret, because it is to their interest to do so. They will not want a confrontation with Moscow while they're trying to avoid one with Peking. What's the matter, Comrade Colonel? Are you afraid?"

"Afraid?" I considered my reply. "No, Comrade Anya, not afraid, just appalled by the senselessness

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the scheme. Those people in Moscow, they have not lived here as long as we have; they do not know the temper of these people. They think to kill a Negro astronaut will split the country and wreck the rightists. They think it will hamper the operations in Vietnam. They are wrong."

"Nonetheless, you will obey orders, Comrade Colonel."

"Yes, of course I'll obey orders." She was still standing in the position of attention. "Dismissed, Comrade Major. I think I heard the thump of little feet in the kitchen upstairs."

"Just one more thing, Semyon Alexeivitch," Anne said evenly. "My own orders are that if you refuse to follow instructions, I am to take over and complete the mission. What will happen to you after that will be up to our superiors."

In the weeks that followed, Anne was another person, harsh with the twins, distant and impersonal with me.

There was one more shopping spree. This time Anne brought with her a Smith & Wesson .38, with shoulder holster. Although she did not say as much, I knew that she had also brought one for herself. They were superb Russian copies and could not be traced.

Anne became more and more of an automaton. The twins felt the strain between us with growing unhappiness.

I thought of them growing up in Russia, perhaps going on to Middle City and membership in the Mountain Vale Country Club before they, too, disappeared abroad, waiting for orders "in place." I thought about the three-room apartment somewhere on the dreary outskirts of Moscow, and the four-cylinder Moscva. And, of course, the red ribbon of the Order of Lenin, and my ten years of back pay piled up in the State Bank. I could spend some of it on a small television set, provided one was available.

But mostly I thought about the twins.

March 19 drew nearer.

That morning we sat the twins in front of the television set to watch the astronaut's parade in comfort, armed with a supply of peanut butter sandwiches and soft drinks, and looked after by Mrs. Kennett, who came in several days a week to help Anne with the housework. We could have afforded a full-time live-in, if we could have found one.

Anne was wearing her fur coat against the March weather, and today she seemed almost her own self again. I headed downtown by a roundabout route, feeling the Smith & Wesson pressing my ribs as I turned the Cadillac's steering wheel.

"Today's the day," Anne said. "And then, Russia. My God, Semyon, but it will be good to get back to work again and get the boys off to military school. You've spent ten

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years writing those filthy capitalist lies while I've looked after those brats."

I turned off the Beltway at the Frederick Road exit.

"Two good new Soviet citizens," I said gently.

Anne snorted. "Two tours of pregnancy duty. Why are you turning in here?"

I steered the Cadillac into the National Cemetery off Frederick Road and headed for a remote corner. "I want to check the gun," I told her, "and we won't be seen in here."

I pulled to a halt behind a rise that effectively concealed us from view. Then I got the gun out.

"You know," I told Anne, "we've been short changed all our lives and it didn't begin with Middle City. I'm not going to go on being short changed, Anne, and I won't let it happen to the boys."

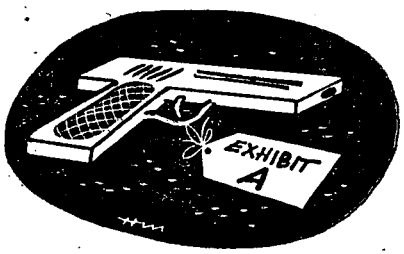
And then I shot Major Anya Grovanov. I then telephoned the Federal Bureau of Investigation to make this statement.

(signed)
John G. MacLean

Classification: Top Secret
SUBJECT: Attached Transcript
To: The Director
FROM: T. D. Wrightson, S.A.C., Baltimore.

In view of the fact that the incident occurred on U.S. Property and in view of the contents of this transcript, and in view also of subject's cooperative attitude, I recommend no prosecution. Notes on "Middle City" especially valuable.

Wrightson, S.A.C.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a COLONEL MARCH story by

JOHN DICKSON CARR

If a completely sane man told you that he had just been the eye-witness of a murder in which he saw an old man shot in the chest and fall to the floor and saw that murder committed by a pistol in an empty glove, with no hand in the glove, and no one, nothing at all, holding the glove, and no person on the scene of the crime except the victim—well, you'd be immensely puzzled, wouldn't you? But if the completely sane man then said, "I haven't even told you the worst of it yet"—well, turn to another story—if you can!

THE MAN WHO SAW THE INVISIBLE

by JOHN DICKSON CARR

A TAXI BROUGHT HIM TO THE DERBY Street entrance of New Scotland Yard. He was a well-dressed man with somewhat protuberant eyes, an inquiring nose, and a frantic seriousness of manner. And he was so excited that the constable on duty at the entrance could hardly make out a word he was saying.

"Murdered him right in front of me!" gabbled the newcomer, holding to his bowler hat as though it might blow off. "Might have murdered me too, and very nearly did, because the next bullet hit the lamp shade beside me, and—"

"Now, sir!" urged the law soothingly. "Who did all this?"

"A pair of gloves did," said the newcomer.

"A what?"

"A pair of gloves. Only they hadn't got any hands inside them. Or any arms or body either, for that matter. The fellow was invisible. And mark my words, he'll kill that girl next!"

The constable stood back and studied him. This man did not look demented. His eyes were watery, and he gulped out steamy breaths on the raw air.

"Yes, sir," said the constable. "Straight on, first turning, third door on the left."

He spoke a formula. The door he indicated bore only the words, D-3, COLONEL MARCH, but many stories lay behind it. It is, in fact, the home of queer tales, and exists solely for

Copyright, 1940 by William Morrow & Company, Inc.; originally titled "The New Invisible Man."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the purpose of receiving them. To the Metropolitan Police come strangers with complaints which do not seem to bear the light of day or reason. But, unless the complainant is an obvious lunatic, such matters have to be investigated, and Department D-3 is their clearing house.

D-3 has its own staff, notably Inspector (ex-Captain) Roberts, who served under Colonel March in different days. It is not governed by the routine organization, and deals direct with the Commissioner's office. Some maintain that Colonel March was put in charge of it because nothing on earth could possibly surprise him. He is also well served by his vast fund of good-for-nothing information, and his absorption in any kind of puzzle from a jigsaw up.

Those who get past Inspector Roberts find in the inner office a large, amiable man (weight 238 pounds) with a speckled face, an interested blue eye, and a very short pipe projecting from under a cropped mustache which might be sandy or gray.

On this particular morning the agitated man in the bowler hat did get past the outer office. Business, as Colonel March pointed out to Inspector Roberts, was bad, and they might as well hear what the man had to say.

"I am aware," said the newcomer, with a certain dignity, "that you must think me mad. Very well. Say that I *am* mad—" His native caution checked him. "Er—no, don't say that; perhaps I am a little upset. But surely my name and standing should be sufficient guarantee that I am telling the truth? My name is Rodman, Horace Rodman. I am the senior partner of Rodman and Hughes, Chartered Accountants and Income Tax Consultants. I have lived for sixteen years at Number Twenty-four St. Nicholas Row, Hampstead. Sir, I saw a murder done; and Heaven help me, nobody will believe it!"

His voice had acquired an asthmatic and passionate note.

"It's quite all right," March assured him. "I knew a fellow once who had the same trouble. Just fire away."

"I'm not sure I know how," said Rodman abruptly, after a pause. He reflected. "It concerns a new block of flats which has just gone up opposite my house in St. Nicholas Row." He reflected again. "A number of houses were torn down to make room for the flats. My friend Mrs. Atchison, of Number Eighteen, told me she was not sorry to see Number Twenty-three go, because it certainly had an unpleasant reputation in her grandfather's time."

"You mean it was supposed to be haunted?" asked March, with still greater interest.

"No, no, no!" cried the other. "I did not say so," he added. "And I cannot imagine any—er—'haunt'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

transferring itself to the modernistic building across the way. I must tell you about the architecture; it has a great deal of bearing on what I saw. You have probably noticed these new Spanish-style buildings, in yellow stucco with green facings, where every corner is rounded, and every room has one long window stretching entirely across it, like the glass door of a bookcase? Eh? Yes. That was how I could see so clearly.

"You see, the flats are not yet quite finished. Although there are a number of 'let' signs in the windows, only three or four families have moved in. I am interested in my fellow-man, sir," said Mr. Rodman, rather defiantly. "I am a student of human nature, and I don't care who knows it.

"Well, I *had* noticed the couple occupying the four-room flat which is directly opposite the second-floor windows of my house. They are—or profess to be—a Mr. and Mrs. James Hartley. The husband is a nondescript young man, who drives a 1936 Hillman coupe, and has an office in the City. The wife is a really beautiful and, I believe, refined girl."

His sudden lyricism embarrassed him.

"I had several times noticed the young lady going in and out, and once I met her in the street. I have also seen her, with a dustcloth round her head, cleaning the windows opposite. Mrs. Atchison thought this unbecoming in her. So did Mr. and Miss Paulus, at Number Twenty. I can only say," declared Mr. Rodman emphatically, "that I don't agree. She has hair the color of ripe—well, such is the case. This much I can tell you: she is in very terrible fear of something. For God's sake do not think I am imagining things for one reason or another. If you had seen her face, as I did, after it happened . . .

"It happened, you see, only last night, February twelfth, when I was going up to bed. My bedroom is on the second-floor front. I usually retire punctually at eleven; but I was a little later than usual, because I had been fidgety all evening. I don't know why.

"Before turning on the light in my bedroom I went to draw the curtains. That was how I came to be looking straight across, not forty feet away, into the dark window opposite. No curtains have been put up there. It is not Mr. and Mrs. Hartley's bedroom or sitting room. As a matter of fact, it is not yet furnished, except for carpets which have been fitted throughout, and one or two odds and ends packed away there. I had seen it by daylight and knew it for a room hardly more than ten feet square, raw enough, with cream-painted walls, cream-varnished doors, and gray carpeting.

"It was a quiet night, and very cold. In front of the flats there is a double street-lamp, which threw a faint kind of glow up over the yel-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

low-and-green building and high up through the window. Someone, bent low, was moving quickly and stealthily round that room. It might be nothing? Quite. Quite! But the man was carrying an automatic pistol and wore a big pair of dirty, white-cotton gloves—I saw one of them flatten out against the window like a starfish."

Rodman paused. Colonel March's big sandy-haired head was bent forward with concentration. He glanced sideways at Inspector Roberts, who was now not quite so sure of the visitor's lack of mental balance.

"You could see all this," said March, "from across the street?"

"I fetched a pair of field glasses," said Rodman, with sudden loftiness. "Kindly do not interrupt me. The old man took off his gloves and put them down with the pistol on a round table in the middle of the room. Then he came towards the window and turned on the light. It was a dusty electric bulb, hanging from an unshaded socket in the ceiling near the window. But it gave a passable light; and I had a good look at the man's face.

"It was not James Hartley, or any man I had seen in those flats. I tell you I knew he was an old sinner, from the very turn of his neck and hands. He was a wicked-faced old man with a drooping mustache and thick-lensed spectacles which gave him an intensity of stare rather like the pictures of Doctor Crippen. His overcoat had a fur collar, too. And he began to run his hands along the window ledge, as though he were searching for something.

"Please remember the bareness of that room. I could see all of it. There was nobody else there. It had three cream-painted doors—one in the rear wall, in line with the window, and one in each of the two side walls. I should have noticed if any door had moved an inch. Not one did. The only articles of furniture were an ordinary kitchen chair near the window and the bare table in the center, on which the man had put down his pistol and gloves. A box with three doors and one window. There wasn't a crevice where anyone could have hidden.

"The man began groping along the window ledge. Finally he opened one big pane of the window and put out his bald head; I remember his shadow from the street lamp climbing up the yellow stucco wall. He uttered a peculiar kind of whistle, which sounded very loud in the quiet street. Then he drew in his head and turned back to the door at the rear of the room as he was in the act of locking the window.

"If that whistle was a signal, he got an answer. Two shots were fired at him point-blank.

"They were fired, I tell you, from the other side of that table in the middle of the room, between the table and the rear door. They were fired from the pistol which had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been lying on the table. I *saw* them fired. The first bullet struck him in the chest and kicked him back against the window ledge, where he fell. The second bullet missed him, drilled through his window, smashed my window, and broke the glass shade of a lamp not a foot from my head. I saw the hand—the glove, I mean—fire the pistol; but there was no other person in that room."

Rodman nodded his head twice.

"I have the bullet, you know," he added with ghoulish hopefulness. "I dug it out of the wall in my bedroom and brought it along."

Colonel March was refreshed. His large face wore a quizzical look which was not disbelief at all; he tapped his fingers on the desk separating him from Rodman, as though he were about to make a move in a game of chess.

"Just a moment," he said, "while I make sure I understand you. You *saw* this pistol fire the shots?"

"I did."

"Where was the pistol, exactly?"

Rodman changed color. "Held by one of the big gloves, at the back of the room."

"Was the glove on the table?"

"No, above the table."

"I see. You were actually looking *through* the place where the murderer must have been standing?"

"I was."

"Excellent! . . . Any comments, Roberts?"

Inspector Roberts smiled. "Well, sir, it's interesting enough; but where's the corpse? People usually complain in the case of a murder, you know. Mr. Rodman says this occurred last night. That would be F Division. I was talking to the Divisional-Inspector only this morning, and he said nothing about it."

"Oh, yes. I am aware of that," snapped Rodman, still a curious color. "You see, I haven't even told you the worst of it yet. Shall I go on? Thank you.

"I was alarmed. I'm not ashamed to admit that. For a few seconds I quite literally couldn't move. I knew I had to go over there: duty. Besides, I was curious. But I had to find a policeman first. I hurried downstairs, got my hat and coat, and tumbled out.

"There was no difficulty finding a policeman; the man on the beat had heard the shots too, and was coming to investigate. The window in the flat was now dark. I told the policeman what I had seen, though I daresay he didn't take it all in, for one reason or another. We entered the flats together.

"There were two elevators, but they didn't work; there was a porter, but we couldn't find him. We were in a great concrete shell of a building, rasping to every echo, and with a few frosted-glass lights. But I knew—Mrs. Atchison had found out—the number of the Hartleys' flat.

"We went upstairs and knocked.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After a minute or two Mrs. Hartley opened the door. Er—her first name is Elizabeth, or Betty. She was wearing a pink dressing gown, and looked as though she had been roused out of bed. But she was frightened; I could tell that. The trouble was—"

"Well?" asked Colonel March.

"She swore there was absolutely nothing wrong in the flat, that she had been in bed, and had heard no shots. The constable said quite sensibly, 'Well, ma'am, there were shots, because I heard them myself; and this gentleman says one of them nearly killed him.' She said that the inner walls of the flat were soundproof. It is only fair to admit that this is true.

"We demanded to be shown the unfurnished room. She made no difficulty about this. It opened off the central hall, where odds and ends of lumber were stacked in confusion—a sewing machine, a big box full of framed photographs, sheets of printed paper, a folding Japanese screen through which the constable unfortunately put his foot. We cleared this away, and went in. That was when I began to have a queer sensation that something spongy had got into my head where the brain ought to be.

"For the old man I had seen, alive or dead, was not in the room. And there was no bullet hole in the window.

"There was no bullet hole in the window," he repeated.

"Gentlemen, I think that bewildered me more than the absence of the victim. There might have been time for a victim to have been carried away or hidden before we arrived. I say there *might*. But a solid .38 caliber bullet—I have it here—had gone through the glass of this window before it went through the glass of mine; and there was not a scratch here to show where it had passed. The gloves and pistol were also missing.

"The policeman, I admit, looked at me oddly. I went round that room like—I almost said, like a terrier sniffing. I don't care! Let me assure you that there was no possibility of my having been mistaken about the room, or got the wrong room. There is only one place on a direct line with my bedroom; you must test it as I did then.

"I saw the gray carpeting, the cream-colored walls. Here was the kitchen chair. Here was the table. Here were the three equidistant doors: the rear one opened into the hall, the right-hand one opened into the sitting room, and the left-hand one into an empty linen closet. The only thing I had been unable to see from my bedroom was a radiator under the window. The only mark of any kind in the room was a long triangular indentation in the pile of the carpet, where, Mrs. Hartley explained, the folding Japanese screen had stood before they cleared this room of lumber.

"Now, Mrs. Hartley was terrified

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of something. That I'll swear. She has very expressive hazel eyes, and she did not even seem to hear what I was saying. She stood there with her face flushed, hugging her dressing gown round her in the cold, but she seemed as much puzzled as terrified. I warned her, for her own good, that if she was having anything to do with thieves and killers she would regret it."

He moved his neck.

"The worst of it occurred when her husband came bursting in, tying on *his* dressing gown, and alleging that *he* had been roused by our voices 'yelling' in his flat in the middle of the night. I was not yelling. But he was in a vile temper. His hair, which was rumpled, stuck straight out in front like the peak of a cap; and his face, which I should have described as rather unpleasant, now looked sinister.

"By this time the constable had grown apologetic, but I would have none of this. 'Never apologize, never explain' is my motto—an aristocratic motto, if I may say so. Hartley, I am afraid, was angry. He denied that he had ever seen or heard of the old man.

"'So,' he said, 'you saw a pair of gloves pick up a gun and shoot somebody who doesn't exist? Blast my ears with lightning! Did you wake me up in the middle of the night just to tell me that? You didn't see a line of cigars hanging in the air and smoking themselves,' did you? Look at this flat. It's an ordinary flat, or at least I thought it was. Look at this door. It's a practical door, and no invisible man walked through it. If you want to search the place, go ahead. And then get out.'

"But this did not last. When we went into the sitting room, where it was warm, something occurred that struck the anger off his face. Up to that time I was at my wits' end. Perhaps I talked sharply, and turned things out of drawers; but I am accustomed to being obeyed unquestioningly, as any clerk of mine will tell you.

"Then I knew I was right, for I saw it—a photograph, in an old-fashioned frame, brightly lighted by a table lamp. There was no mistaking those staring spectacled eyes; it was a photograph of the old man who had disappeared.

"Hartley knew that I had seen it, and his expression altered. The whole atmosphere of the room changed, too. He made a quick movement to get in front of the picture, or snatch it away, but I was there ahead of him. His forward movement was so violent that he slipped on the smooth pile of the carpet; he must have twisted his ankle, for he went down with a crash that turned him muddy pale. Mrs. Hartley ran to him, screaming his first name. When she lifted up his shoulders I was rather appalled by the look she gave me; for what had I done?

"A few minutes later I was out in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the street, advised by the constable to go home. They had showed me proofs of the truth. I could not doubt the truth, and you will sympathize with me when I say I had the horrors all night. But I'm a taxpayer, and a decent citizen, and I insist on knowing the meaning of it. That photograph was a picture of Hartley's grandfather *who died before the war!*"

At this point, quietly, a constable came into the room with an official form filled up. There was a rattle as Inspector Roberts put coal on the fire. The echo of Rodman's shrill voice still seemed to linger; firelight grew brighter in the big room while Roberts used the poker.

And the constable said, "A Mr. and Mrs. Hartley to see you, sir."

"Ask Mr. and Mrs. Hartley to wait a moment," said Colonel March blandly.

He got up and went over to stand with his back to the fire. He had the military trick of standing as though bent a little forward from the waist, his arms slightly curved at his sides; but this stiffness contrasted with the amusement on his speckled face. A bland blue eye surveyed them, and his short pipe seemed in danger of scorching his nose.

"We must discuss the matter first," he explained. "Mr. Rodman, I rather envy you. Your adventure is what a younger generation would describe as 'hot stuff'."

"If," said Rodman, freezing up, "you prefer to make fun of—"

"Not at all," the other assured him. "I believe every word you say."

Inspector Roberts, though youngish, was well trained. He did not actually drop the poker with which he was stirring the fire, though he looked as if it had been a near thing.

"You think," cried Rodman, "I saw a—?"

"Ghost? Oh, no." Colonel March added, as though consolingly, "Not this time, anyhow."

"Then it was a real crime after all? A real man was shot with a real bullet in that room? Is that what you think?"

"I am quite sure of it."

Rodman seemed as taken aback as though he had never believed this. "But how? I ask you, *how?* There was nobody in the room; there was no corpse, as your friend says; there was no bullet hole in the window; there was—"

"Wait a bit," urged March. "Never mind your notebook for the moment, Roberts. Before we consider any course of action I should like to dig a few more gems out of our friend's admirable narrative style. Mr. Rodman, how long have the Hartleys lived in that flat?"

"Two weeks last Monday, I think."

"Previous to last night, had you ever been inside the room where the man was shot?"

"Never."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That little table in the room, now. You said it was a round table. Was it also a three-legged table?"

"Didn't I tell you it was? But please listen to me," begged Rodman, as though he had not been able to get in a word edgeways. "If a man was killed there, who was he? I've questioned people till I'm blue in the face, and nobody ever saw him or heard of him. Where's his body? And how was it done? And did Hartley kill him? I ask you, as a public servant, to answer relevant questions, if you can think of any answer. What difference does it make whether the table had three legs or four legs? Or whether the room had one door or two doors or six doors, for that matter?"

"On the contrary," said Colonel March, "the number of doors is very important. If there had been only one door in the room, the criminal would not have been able to act."

"But I tell you nobody went in or out by any of the doors!"

"Oh, that," said Colonel March. "I quite agree with you."

"Then—"

"No, you don't," said the other with ferocious geniality. He pointed his finger. "You're enjoying yourself immensely. You never got such a thrill in your life as you've had out of this. You came here with the particular purpose of mystifying me, to spread the glad tidings of terror to a wider audience than Mrs. Atchison; and now you're damned well going over the same jumps you set for me . . . Ask Mr. and Mrs. Hartley to come in."

It might be wondered how Rodman's description of this couple coincided with the facts. It is possible that his account of Mrs. Hartley, at least, was colored by a romantic imagination. Betty Hartley did not seem ethereal or spiritual. She was a good-looking, healthy-looking girl whose grave hazel eyes were redeemed by dimples at the corners of the mouth; a brown velour hat was tilted over her thick yellow hair. Her husband, peering over her shoulder, had rather a strong face with a trace of irony in it. They both stopped dead on the threshold when they saw Rodman.

"Oh, bother!" said the girl explosively.

"Come in," said Colonel March, teetering before the fire. "Come in and sit down. This is Inspector Roberts. The other one I think you know. Mr. Rodman had been telling us a very interesting story—"

"I don't doubt it," observed Hartley with an air of gloom. "Well, what do you think?"

"I think," said Colonel March, "that you were very foolish to come here."

Rodman had been right about one thing, at least: Betty Hartley was afraid.

"He insisted on coming," she said. "I told him not to come. I begged him not to, though not for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the reason you may be thinking. We came here to give our version of what happened the other night. But since Mr. Rodman has already —"

"My dear young lady," said Rodman, as though he were beginning a letter. He tried to soften this. "Please see, try to see, that I am acting in your own interests. Look at you: you're trembling. I have always made my own decisions in this life, and—"

Betty Hartley spoke fretfully. She said, "Oh, dry up!"

"As for me," remarked Hartley with a cheerful air, "I hold by the *corpus delicti*. I wouldn't like to swear how the thing works, but I know it gives a devil of a lot of trouble in detective stories. You can't hang me until you can produce the victim's teeth or whiskers. And I hope, conversely, that I'm not to blame if a ghost walks on the premises." His tone changed, and he looked up. "Why was I foolish to come here?"

Colonel March's voice became sharp.

"Because, if I know your symptoms at all, you ought to be at home in bed," March answered. "You must have a nasty bullet wound in your shoulder where your wife shot you last night."

There was a silence of such bursting quality that they even became aware of dim outer noises in the building—the passing of footsteps, the closing of a door. It took a little time for the words to sink in. Mr. Horace Rodman got to his feet, and sat down again. He has since described—to Mrs. Atchison—that he has seldom been so taken aback in his life—especially at the scared face of Betty Hartley.

But he was just as taken aback by the subsequent amusement. Hartley had sat down, looking less ill. And both Hartley and Colonel March were chuckling.

"So you spotted it," said Hartley. "Well, thank the Lord for that."

"Furthermore," insisted the Colonel, with an expression of great pleasure nevertheless, "if you don't put your arm back in that sling again, you'll get into serious trouble with the doctor. Mrs. Hartley, I beg your pardon. I know the shooting wasn't a part of the game, but I hardly think you'll get into any difficulty over—"

"I don't see how you can stand there and laugh," cried the girl. "It was horrible. And you don't understand! I—"

"I hope I understand," said the Colonel. He turned to Hartley. "You're a theatrical producer, aren't you?"

"And doing well," agreed the other with decision. "Two fairly good runs in two years. Not West End, maybe. But wait! So you'd heard of me, eh? Which one did you see, *The Riddle in Red* or *Dead Voices*?"

Colonel March was apologetic.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"As a matter of fact, neither. Mr. Rodman's painstaking account of your talk made it seem likely, and *you* said, 'Look at this door. It's a practical door.' The choice of term was distinctive. A *practical* door or window, meaning a real one, is a word used exclusively in stage terminology. The big box of framed photographs suggested the theater, as the sheets of printed paper suggested playbills.

"But when I heard about the long triangular indentation in the pile of the carpet, just as used by your famous predecessor, I felt sure you were trying out a variation of the original illusion. D'you mind telling me what you were up to?"

"Stage version of *The Invisible Man,*" replied Hartley with enthusiasm. "Never been done. And I can do it. Look! If I take—" He broke off. "You know the basis of the trick?"

"It deserves to be mentioned with reverence," said March with equal enthusiasm. "It is a variation of the first really revolutionary stage illusion of modern times. The magician and illusionist, Colonel Stodare, presented it first as 'The Sphinx' in 1865. On the same principle the great Maskelyne built his Disappearing Cabinet, and it has been the foundation of nearly every ghost illusion since.

"This is how 'The Sphinx' was presented. In the middle of three sides of a black-draped stage stood a circular table with three legs. On this table appeared a severed head without a body. It talked, answered questions, and so on; yet the audience could see over, under, and through the table to assure themselves there was no person there.

"Ah, you remember it? Now imagine a square, which is the stage. In the center of the square imagine a triangle, formed by the three legs of the table, with its apex or point towards the audience. In each of the two long sides of the triangle—towards the audience—is set a looking glass. You think you are seeing under the table to the back wall. What you actually see is the reflection of the two side walls and floor, similar black curtains and carpeting, coming together to form a perfect whole. The invisible body, of course, is hidden by the two sheets of looking glass.

"You, Mr. Hartley, made an ingenious improvement on it. Your room had three white-painted doors, exactly the same on three sides. Your Sphinx-table stood in the middle. One of the looking glasses would reflect half of the under part of the door on the right; the other would reflect half of the under part of the door on the left. The walls were the same; carpet was fitted up to the baseboards. A watcher opposite would apparently see under the table—to the rear wall, carpet, and rear door, which door was really the fitted-together reflection of the doors on either side.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"In your sinister Crippen role, evilly mustached, you had to take certain precautions. You had to wait until you were in the room, until you had put down the gloves and pistol on the table and moved to the window, before you could turn on the light. Otherwise you would have been seen smack in the looking glass. Afterwards, a pair of gloves, ably played by your wife and helpmeet, could be made to appear above the table and perform what antics they liked. The invisible man—in this case, the invisible woman!"

Hartley made a gesture of silent applause. Betty Hartley was almost in tears. But by this time Mr. Horace Rodman had reached a point of hysteria.

"Illusion!" he howled. "Don't tell me I saw an illusion. I won't believe it. I won't have it. A *real* bullet broke my window. It nearly killed me. But it went through their window without—"

"You play this one," Hartley said politely to Colonel March.

"Thank you," said the Colonel. "Correct me if I am wrong: that was an error; that was not intended, any more than you were intended to be shot." He turned to Rodman. "I rather think that part of it is clear, from your own recital. When you went bursting into their flat that night, it was very cold in the little room. You particularly commented to me on how cold it was. But there was a radiator in that room, and the flat was centrally heated throughout. In the next breath you explained how you went into the sitting room, where it was quite warm.

"Am I being deeply subtle if I suggest that it was cold because the window—or one pane of it—had been open for some time? You pointed out that several panes of those long windows open out like little doors. The terrible mustached figure opened one pane, stuck his head out, and whistled to attract your attention in case he hadn't already done so. He left it a few inches open, and didn't think to lock it again until you broke in with the policeman some time afterwards. I rather think that is how the bullet went through a window without leaving a hole in the windowpane."

Hartley was nursing his arm and musing.

"My dear old Grandpop," he said, "the most villainous-looking old coot who ever carried a collection plate in church. I have impersonated him, under the stimulus of his picture, in several repertory productions where some seedy thug is supposed to—"

"I think I must be going mad," Rodman interrupted, staring at Colonel March. "What did I hear you say? 'Whistled to attract my attention?' Attract *my* attention? Why?"

Hartley looked politely at his wife.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And *you* play this one," he said.

"I will," said Betty, seeming to bristle up inside. She turned on Rodman. "Do you know what you are?"

"My dear young lady—"

The dear young lady rose in a glory of rage.

"Do you know what you've been doing, you and your precious Mrs. Atchison? Do you deny you've been snooping and spying on us, just as you do on everyone else you can, only worse, ever since we've moved into that flat? You've tried to find out everything about us you can. You've stood up there with a pair of field glasses and followed me from room to room, making life a perfect misery to me. I'll bet—"

"Better see to the door," Colonel March said to Hartley.

"—and since we were going to test the mirror illusion anyway, I thought we'd just teach you a jolly good lesson—*and* scare your hair off. I suppose it's all my fault, really. I thought that was a property gun, loaded with blanks. Only it wasn't. And I'm glad I broke your beastly old window, anyway. But when we saw what an awful row we'd caused with real shots, we had to pretend it didn't happen, or you'd have had us in the police court for shooting at you. Jim would have had to explain what he was about, and ruined the play—"

"Light of my life—" began her husband pacifically.

"And, of course, Jim would go on. I had to hold you off while he got rid of the grandfather make-up and slid the mirrors out from the grooves in the table and hid them, and closed the window. Oh, I don't mind anything else, but I can't forgive you for being so virtuous and triumphant when you grabbed that photograph, and saw Jim slip and land with his full weight on the carpet just after he'd g-got a bullet—"

"You'll have to say it another time, Mrs. Hartley," said Inspector Roberts, looking out of the open door. "Mr. Rodman seems to have left us in a hurry."

She grew calmer, and grinned impishly. "That's off my chest, anyhow. I'm terribly sorry, though. Can he prosecute us?"

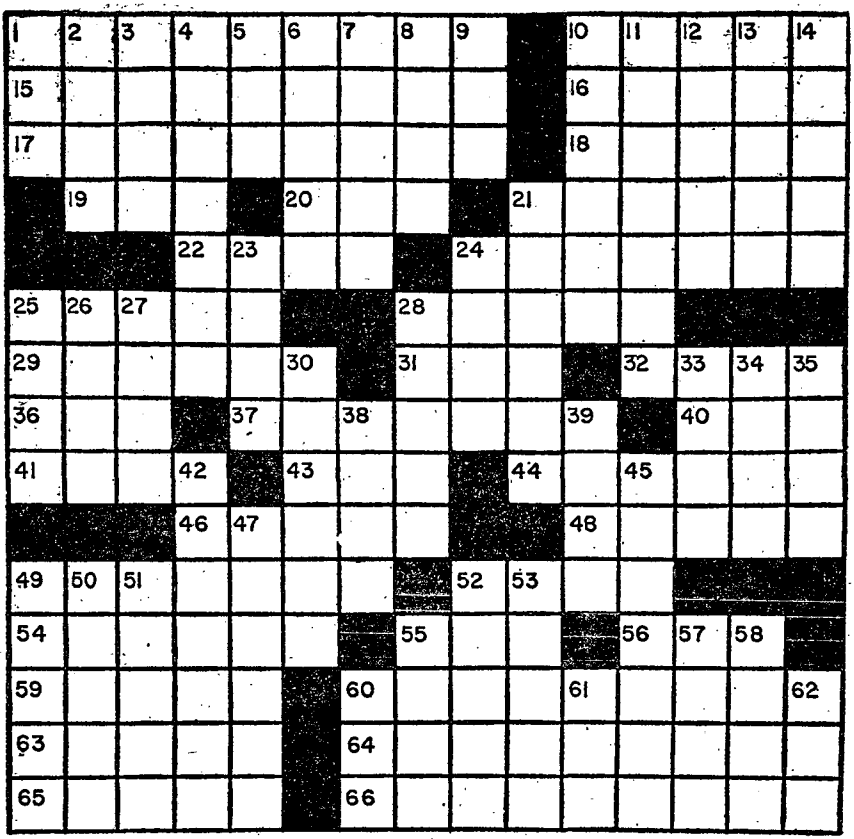
"Somehow," said Hartley, "I don't think he will. When this story begins to circulate—no, I don't think he will. With regard to his future conduct, too; when the butcher and the candle-stick-maker hear their version of his heroic conduct, he will be—"

Colonel March nodded magnificently, like an emperor.

"Exactly," he said. "The real invisible man."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DOUBLE CROSS-WORD PUZZLE



by NORMA SCHIER

ACROSS
1 Carr's H. M.
10 Widely talked of tonight
15 One who estranges
16 River to the Moselle: Fr. sp.
17 Nero, for instance

DOWN
1 Insane
2 Abbreviation for 54 A's evaluation of his deductions
3 Girl's name
4 Rejoin
5 Business abbr.
6 Prophetic
7 Slanted

ACROSS
18 A criminal is this after being caught
19 The old . . . in the corner
20 Island to Maigret
21 With 43 A, a leading author, editor, anthologist

DOWN
8 Motive for murder
9 Before: Poet.
10 Another motive for murder
11 Mending
12 Death's head expressions
13 Telephone codes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ACROSS

22 Skill in dealing with touchy situations
24 French artist of the Fauves school
25 National park
28 Consumed
29 Mustachioed Belgian
31 Three: pref.
32 To con
36 Suffix, espec. for metallic elements
37 Descriptive of thief's behavior
40 See 10 A.
41 Important feature of work of 54 A, for instance.
43 See 21 A.
44 Even the great detectives make them along the way
46 Exclamation that 29 A would make
48 Offers temporarily.
49 Asserted
52 Choice: abbr.
54 The Master of them all
55 What criminals, and also the innocent, often do
56 A gunner takes it
59 Licorice flavored herb
60 Setting for Dupin
63 Part of what the raven said
64 Owner of murderous hands
65 Cards
66 One whose career is his palate

DOWN

14 Color again
21 Grammatical case
23 Since (referring to time) (2 wds.)
24 Husband: Fr.
25 Heroic
26 Inner core
27 "The Daughter of ...."
28 Feminine suffixes
30 Silks
33 On
34 Dunsany or Peter
35 Not so much
38 What to do to the MWA Annual
39 Perry's creator
42 Homonym of English aristocrat detective
45 Tills again
47 Arab chiefs
49 Gregorian ....
50 One who works alone: sl.
51 What a murder victim isn't
52 Statue by Michelangelo
53 Saw again
55 Stringed instrument
57 ".... rhythm"
58 Stubborn one
60 Spoil
61 .... pro nobis
62 Poetic contraction

(Solution on page 136)

NEW

coming soon in EQMM the newest short stories and novelets by such famous mystery writers as

GEORGES SIMENON
HUGH PENTECOST
JULIAN SYMONS
MICHAEL GILBERT
CORNELL WOOLRICH
LAWRENCE TREAT
JAMES YAFFE
CELIA FREMLIN
ANTHONY GILBERT
GERALD KERSH
CHRISTIANNA BRAND
VICTOR CANNING
ANDREW GARVE
ROBERT BLOCH
STUART PALMER
PHYLLIS BENTLEY
STANLEY ELLIN
CHARLOTTE ARMSTRONG

every name a guarantee of the best detective-crime-suspense stories being written today . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* crime story by

ANTHONY GILBERT

Many stories, perhaps most, interest, amuse, excite—but generally they skim just over the surface, seldom cracking the layer of ice that conceals the deeper emotions. Some stories, however, do crack the surface and plunge to the bottom of the pool. These stories are not always painless to read—we don't ordinarily want our deeper emotions stirred up; there is mud, or worse, at the bottom of the pool.

Anthony Gilbert's "The Intruders" is the kind of story that penetrates below the surface—to those hidden emotions we do not like to disturb, that we prefer to remain quiescent far below our everyday feelings. And when we read this kind of story, we may easily become frightened—even terrified.

But this fright or terror (how susceptible are you?) can have two sides, can reflect two points of view—the one we take for granted and the one we don't normally think of . . . If this sounds puzzling or mysterious, it is because we do not want to be too explicit; find out for yourself by reading Anthony Gilbert's unusual study in crime—crime with two faces . . .

THE INTRUDERS

by ANTHONY GILBERT

As soon as she opened the door, even before she set eyes on the intruder, Elizabeth Bruce knew there was something wrong. Not because of any sound—the house was deathly still. It was the atmosphere. At this hour of a hot Saturday afternoon in July the house should have been empty—the young men from the top flat away for the week-end, the girls on the ground floor on a package holiday in Spain. Besides, a sixth sense as definite as hearing or sight told her she wasn't alone. The same way she was listening, taut and apprehensive, someone else was listening, too.

The impression was so strong that her first impulse was to pick up the heavy bags of groceries and hurry back to the street. But that was absurd. She couldn't walk up

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and down an empty pavement all afternoon. Reproaching herself for a silly superstitious old woman, she clutched her bundles and started to tramp up to the floor above.

He was waiting, as she had known he would be, standing outside the door of her apartment, his head turned inquiringly toward the staircase. Trying to break in, supposing the house to be deserted, she thought. Not that he showed any trace of embarrassment as he came forward gaily, a dark young man, handsome in rather a flashy way, with a tinkling laugh as artificial as an electric light bulb.

"You must be Mrs. Miller," he said confidently. She had the odd feeling she had seen him somewhere before. It wasn't till later that she realized it was a mass-produced face, flashing on and off the TV screen in a score of tough melodramas. "This is a bit of luck," he added in the same easy voice. "I was beginning to think I'd missed you."

Miss Bruce, who was short and sturdy and wouldn't have been cast for Helen of Troy even in her long-ago youth, did not reciprocate his gay approach.

"I'm afraid you've come to the wrong house," she said, halting at the head of the stairway. "There's no Mrs. Miller here."

"Oh, but that can't be right. My friend—"

"And hasn't been for the past twelve years," she continued stonily.

"Well." Pensively he gnawed a knuckle. "That's one for the book, isn't it? I suppose the fact is," the smile flashed out again, about as harmless as lightning, "I've come to the wrong door. I'll try upstairs."

"It won't be any good. There's no one there." She bit her lip with chagrin. That was a mistake—she shouldn't have let him know there was no one else on the premises.

"You mean the flat above is vacant?"

"I mean the tenants are out for the day, and Mrs. Miller isn't one of them anyhow." She shifted a little to let him go past her, but he didn't stir.

"Someone had blundered," he quoted. "This *is* Number Fourteen, isn't it?"

"Fourteen Berwick Square. Perhaps you want Warwick Square. That's the other side of the main road."

"Warwick isn't what my friend said. Turn by Carters Stores, past the Roman Church, and there's a letter box on the corner."

"Then he's given you the wrong number."

"That's not like him. Jed's the soul of accuracy."

"There has to be a first time for everything. Well, I hope you'll find your friend." She took a decisive step forward. Her evil angel prompted her to say, "Why not look her up in the telephone directory?"

"Now that's an idea," he agreed warmly. "I say, what must you think of me keeping you standing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

here, laden like a camel?" He darted forward and before she realized what he was going to do he had relieved her of the heavier of the two bags. "You'll have a phone, I expect."

She had, of course; and of course he was going to suggest looking up this probably specious acquaintance in her directory. The notion of letting him into her apartment filled her with unease; desperately she sought for some way out. The young man stood back politely.

"Not lost your key, I hope?" he said. "That would never do, would it? Though I expect you've got another one hidden under the mat or somewhere. I wouldn't bother you," he added in more serious tones, "but you know what it's like trying to get inside a public phone booth on a Saturday afternoon, if it's only to look up a number. Queues of layabouts waiting to put something on the three thirty race—or Irish immigrants telephoning ads to the *Evening Standard*. So if I could just take a squint."

She thought idiotically: even if I screamed there's no one to hear. Since early morning the cars had been moving out, packed with kids and picnic baskets; young men and women had revved off on their noisy motorbikes; even Mr. Pender from Number 5, who spent hours outdoors lovingly tending his ancient Panther, had gone inside to watch racing on the TV. Reluctantly she opened the door.

The sitting room was deliciously cool; she had left the Venetian blinds down, and when she pulled them up the sun came pouring in. Her faint hope that someone might have turned into the Square from the main road was not fulfilled.

"This is a nice room," said the intruder ingratiatingly. "I can see you have good taste. My mother would appreciate this. She's house-proud, too."

He walked through the archway into what the real estate agent called "the through kitchen," and dumped the shopping bag on the table. "Compact, eh? Must be nice to have a place of your own. Now, where were we?" He came strolling back, as cool as you please. "Oh, yes, the phone book. Don't you take any notice of me. Just take off your shoes—I bet they're killing you—and sit back and take it easy."

Indignation almost choked her. She thought if she did remove her shoes it would be to throw them at him. He found the directory and dropped onto the big leather pouffe that she and Beatrice had brought back from Tangier more than ten years before. Normally she would go straight into her bedroom, change her shoes, take off her hat, and freshen up; but this time she had no intention of leaving this young thug alone for a single minute.

She found she couldn't relax; she sat bolt upright on the edge of her chair while he riffled through the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pages of the phone book. She saw him trace his way with a finger in the manner of those to whom print is unfamiliar. Semiliterate under that veneer of sophistication.

He looked up, saw her sitting there. "Do relax," he implored her, laughing. "You make me feel nervous." Never in this world, she thought. "I'd no idea there were so many Millers in the London area. Trouble is I don't even know if she spells it with an 'e' or an 'a'."

"You don't seem to know very much about her, seeing she's your friend," Elizabeth burst forth. "Don't you even know her initial?"

"She's not my friend," he explained. "Well, if she was I'd have known you weren't her, wouldn't I? No, she's Jed's aunt, and he said she was worth a try, nothing to lose, see. He did call her something—Aunt Irene, Aunt Ivy, or something—but she'd be in the book under her husband's name, wouldn't you think?"

"If she has a husband." Only she hadn't, of course, because she didn't exist.

The young man went back to his slow plodding down the page. Elizabeth looked about her. It was a lovely room, old-fashioned, but that was the way she and Beatrice had liked it. They'd chosen and put up the Regency wallpaper themselves as a background for the Empire china cabinet and the glowing Sheraton that held all their linen—sometimes she could hardly believe Beatrice had gone. If she'd been here she'd know how to deal with this young scamp—Beatrice who had allowed nothing to defeat her, not even the cancer that had killed her . . .

She was interrupted by the sound of the directory being slammed shut and thrown casually down; then that laugh tinkled out again.

"Silly me!" said the young man. "I should have my head examined. Of course she won't be in the book. I mean, she doesn't live *in* London—she just has a room here. Trouble is, I don't know the name of the owner of the flat. So—where do we go from here?"

"Couldn't you get in touch with your friend—didn't you say his name was Jed?"

This was just what she had wanted to avoid—getting drawn into a conversation, into a situation that would prolong his intrusion. She thought of saying that unfortunately her telephone was out of order, that he could call up from the phone booth near the hairdresser's on the corner—only she could be sure it would start ringing instantly, and she had enough sense to know that if she allowed him to suspect her growing alarm, which might so easily bubble over into panic, she was lost.

She looked at the instrument, so cool and demure. Ring, can't you? she commanded it. She could then spring forward, let whoever was at the other end realize something was wrong—but you promised you'd

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come, everything's ready and it's most urgent I should see you—something like that. Her friends weren't morons—they'd realize something was in the wind. But the bell remained as silent as the street, where even the dog opposite that yapped incessantly and the child who was capable of exercising his lungs for an hour on end had joined the general exodus to seaside or country.

"You know all the answers, don't you?" he said, grinning. "I say, how about me putting on a kettle? You looked whacked, and no wonder, you poor thing, lugging all those heavy parcels around in this heat. Shocking the way you can't get things delivered these days, isn't it?"

"I don't have tea at this hour," she retorted quickly.

"Well, that's not like my mother. With her any time is tea time. Nature's gift to the Tea Club, I call her. They should get you to do one of these commercials, I tell her. If I was to walk into her house any hour of the day she'd be calling out, 'That you, Len? Just put on the kettle,' before the door was shut."

He picked up the telephone. "New model," he approved. "My mother wanted one of these, but they told her a quid for the model and another thirty bob for installation. Can you beat it—when you think of the rent we pay?"

"If your mother's model is defective—" Oh, she was mad to get embroiled in a conversation. Very likely his mother didn't have a telephone; more likely he didn't even have a mother.

"You're going to say you can demand a new one, but you can't demand a special model. You're likely to get any old rubbish built up from a lot of discarded ones." He was spinning the dial as he spoke; a minute later, though she hadn't heard the bell ringing at the other end, he hung up. "No reply. Well, what do you expect? Afternoon like this. Probably out with his bird. He's a great one for the birds is Jed. Nest all over him." And he laughed again.

"I'm afraid I can't suggest anything else," said Elizabeth. "Unless you think it's worth trying Warwick Square." She stood up to give force to her words.

"I say," he replied, "you really are in a hurry to get rid of me, aren't you? What d'you think I'm going to do to you?"

That was when she know the actual stab of fear as distinct from apprehension. She felt the quick treacherous color sweep into her cheeks.

A slow smile curved his lips. "You watch too much TV," he said softly. "Why should you think I—I mean, all I want is to find this Mrs. Miller. Look, whatever you say, I'm going to put that kettle on. You've given me a guilt complex, honest you have. Whatever you say I know you do have a cup of tea this time of day. And whatever else I can't do

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I can make a smashing cup of tea. Of course," he turned what she was sure he considered a roguish glance on her stony face, "if you'd like to invite me to stay a while I'll do the washing up for you."

Whistling softly he made his way into the kitchen. "Or perhaps," he suggested over his shoulder, "something a bit stronger. You really do look tuckered out. How about a drop of brandy? My mother swears by it."

She could hear him opening the cupboards under the kitchen unit. "Glasses? Ah, yes." In a moment he was back with a tumbler. "Just a squiz of soda, I thought. You wouldn't like me to get your slippers for you?"

She set the brandy aside untasted. "I don't wear slippers in the house. Now, Mr.—"

"Lennie," he said. "Us boys don't go in for the formalities, you know. And you're Miss Bruce—I saw an envelope on the table when I was dialing. Look, perhaps you could lend me a hand."

"I don't think—"

"It's my landlady, you see. She's making trouble. That's why it's so important for me to find this Mrs. Miller, only it doesn't look as if I'm going to. Of course, if my mother was in London—but she's not, she's at Chipping Norton, and if I can't raise something towards my back rent—"

She'd known from the start, of course, that it was coming to something like this, though it was perhaps a little more brazen than she had expected.

"I can't see that your back rent is any responsibility of mine," she said.

"Don't be like that," he urged. "It doesn't suit you. I really am in trouble. If I can't sweeten her up a bit I shall find the door bolted when I get back, and she'll keep all my stuff. And what's more, the law would let her do it."

"I expect she has to make a living, too. Couldn't your friend help you?"

"Jed? Oh, he's rowing in my boat. That's why he said to try Mrs. Miller. She's got boys of her own, so she knows what it's like finding yourself on a spot. And being a week-end makes it so awkward. You don't have to be sorry for her—my landlady, I mean. Do you know she has the nerve to charge me six guineas a week for that room—why, that's more than National Assistance gives for everything! Let them try and live on six pounds a week, that's what I say."

"Don't you have a job?" The words burst out of her.

He leaned against the mantelpiece, shaking it so that the French clock under its glass dome shook out an indignant twelve strokes. He put his hands in his pockets.

"You do live in Cloud Cuckoo-land, don't you, Auntie?" he said. "Okay, I'll lay it out on the line for you. As of now, I haven't got a job." He smiled; that smile and his cool reasonable voice chilled her blood

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as no indignation could have done. "Ever hear of redundancy? This Government, put in to protect the workers, and what happens? We're out by the thousands, and we don't all qualify for redundancy pay. Not too bad for some, perhaps—got savings, got a house, something they can mortgage. But for us young chaps, it's a case of last in, first out—it's like finding yourself in a bloody trap."

He took one hand out of his pocket to smooth his carefully waved hair, then smiled again. "Getting all het up about it, aren't I? Well, but it burns me to hear all the old people living nice and safe on pensions most likely, talk about the young not wanting to work. Let them go out and look for jobs and see what happens. Mind you," he added, "I never was one of the nine-to-five brigade, clock on, clock off, coffee break and don't be late, you stopped to blow your nose, I saw you, you do that again and you'll find you've been docked a quarter hour's pay. Private enterprise, that's what Jed and I believe in."

It was the first statement he had made she had no difficulty in accepting. Private enterprise—the quick tickle, the confidence trick, the merchandise casually lifted from the counter, the "borrowed" car, the "found" wallet—anything except honest work.

"So, you do see," Lennie went on, apparently taking it for granted he'd converted her, "that I am in a jam. I'd be eternally grateful to you if you could—well, just give me a helping hand, just get me over the next few days. Thirty quid's what I owe Mrs. Tubbs, though she'd settle for twenty on the nail, I daresay, and let the rest stand over."

The sheer insolence of it silenced her for a moment. Then she burst out, "What on earth makes you suppose I keep money like that in the flat?"

As a matter of fact, today, just by chance, she had almost precisely that sum in her bag; she'd drawn her pension—she drew it once a month and she'd had a few pounds left over. Her bag stood securely on the arm of her chair; she wished she could pop it under a cushion but that would be much too obvious.

"Well," said Lennie consideringly, "I'd have said you were very comfortably off. Everything you've got here is first-class, I can see that, and then most old ladies keep a little put by in an old stocking or something." He offered her a grin she was sure he would describe as faunlike.

"I keep my stockings for their normal purpose, which is to protect me from the cold," she snapped. "And what you suggest is quite out of the question, so, as I'm expecting a friend—"

She feared he would laugh at that in scorn, but instead he turned at once. "Why didn't you say so? No wonder you didn't want my tea. Here's silly me been holding you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up all this time, and you on pins and needles to get me out of the way." He ogled her in a manner she found utterly revolting. "Gentleman or lady?" he insinuated. "Or shouldn't I ask?"

He wandered casually over to the window and threw open the bottom pane. The scent of lime flowers came swimming into the room. "Funny smell, isn't it?" he suggested blandly. "Isn't that what they call an aphrodisiac? Well, no one's in sight, so you've got time to put in a little beauty treatment. Sorry we couldn't come to some arrangement." But even then she didn't believe it was going to be as simple as this. "I suppose I might as well try this Warwick Square," he offered. "Where did you say it was?"

He swayed against her chair as he passed, knocking her blue leather bag to the floor. Both of them dived for it at once, but he was the quicker. The clasp somehow became unfastened and a number of small articles rolled onto the carpet.

"You should have that clasp seen to," he warned her, swinging the bag by its strap, on one finger. "Might flop open in a bus or something—got a screwdriver handy?"

"The clasp is perfectly reliable," she said, putting out a hand to take the bag. But he laughed and teasingly held it just out of reach. She made a panic grab at his arm, the bag tilted, and out slid the blue leather wallet from the Leather School at Florence, with its design of tiny gold Florentine lilies on the front.

"Hey, what's this?" Lennie caught it before it fell. "You wicked old thing—well, naughty old lady anyhow. No money in the house you said. Why, it's packed with notes!"

"Give it to me," she whispered, and suddenly, as though she'd touched a spring, his voice changed. Now it was mean and hostile. "If there's one thing I hate it's a liar," he said. "Keeping me hanging about here half the afternoon, dangling on a string. You could have helped me right away, if you'd liked, but you never meant to, not from the start. Go on, admit it."

"It never occurred to me to help you," she agreed defiantly. "Why should I?"

"Living on Easy Street," he continued. "Playing the pauper. Anyone with half an eye can see the place reeks of money. One of those rings you're wearing"—Aunt Meg's emerald, her mother's diamond engagement ring "—would put *me* on Easy Street."

"What right have you got—?" She was choking with indignation and fear. "If you don't go at once I shall call the police."

He laid the wallet down on a small table beyond her grasp. "So we're coming to threats, are we? Okay, so you'll call the police. And when they come what'll you tell them? That I came here looking

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for a Mrs. Miller, and when you told me she didn't live at this address you suggested I might look for her in the phone book. That was *your* idea, remember? And *you* invited me in and we couldn't find her. I didn't break your door down, you know, I haven't laid a finger on you, and when you said you had a friend coming I said okay, I'd go. Nothing criminal about all that, is there? The police might begin to have their own ideas about funny old girls who invite young chaps into their empty flats—"

He broke off, listening. Footsteps were coming up the stairs. Elizabeth's heart rose on a great wave of thankfulness. Here, unsolicited, was her miracle. Because they could only belong to one person, the young student from above—well, one of them anyway—come back to collect something en route for the country. She knew them both in the casual way that Londoners who share the same house know their neighbors—she had taken in boxes from the tailor, signed for registered mail, and now and again one of them had carried up her shopping bag. The feet stopped outside her door and the bell rang.

"So you can tell the truth sometimes," remarked Lennie's sneering voice. "Go on, let your friend in. Only—just be careful what you say."

She almost fell over her own feet reaching the door. Her heart was a riot of thanksgiving. An instant later she was standing speechless, blind, crippled with fear. For the visitor was a young man she'd never set eyes on before. He looked at her with a show of surprise.

"I *have* come to the right house?" he began. "Oh—I see Lennie's here."

"I'll say Lennie's here," said Len. "You've made a proper monkey of me, Jed. This isn't Mrs. Miller's place at all, and what's more, Miss Bruce here has never heard of her. Poor Miss Bruce, I put the wind up you, didn't I? Honest, she really thinks I'm going to cut her throat or something. You do read such things in the papers, don't you?"

They both began to laugh, and while they were laughing Jed walked in. He was another of these bland conscienceless young men, green-eyed with butter-smooth fair hair. Must have been waiting outside all this time for a signal from his accomplice—they must be small-time operators, she reflected, hyenas of crime running round after the pickings the lordlier beasts disdained. That was the significance of opening the window, of course—Lennie beckoning him up.

"I was sure Moira said Aunt Irene had a room at Number Fourteen," said Jed. "She will keep moving about, you know. Well, that's a facer. I'll tell you what, though—we might ring Moira, she'd know."

"You'll have to make it quick. Miss Bruce is expecting a friend."

"There's a public phone booth on the corner," said Elizabeth, and Jed in his turn stared.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You mean, well, but just a call. We'd pay, wouldn't we, Len? I'm not quite sure how much it is—she lives outside the London area. Got any change, Len?"

Lennie dramatically emptied his pockets, which contained only a few coppers.

"What you do with your money I don't know," said Jed resignedly. "I haven't any change myself, but if Miss Bruce can break a ten-bob note for us—"

Elizabeth turned sharply to pick up her wallet; then her heart gave a sickening thump. Because the wallet had vanished as if it had never been there at all. She had seen Lennie put it on the table before she ran to open the door. She turned on him indignantly.

"Where is it?" she said.

"Where's what? The telephone? But—"

"My wallet. It was on the table a moment ago."

"Wallet," repeated Lennie. "I never saw any wallet."

"It fell out of my bag while you were handling it. I saw you put in on that table. It was there when I went to open the door."

Lennie caught Jed's eye and shook his head. "Old lady's getting confused. She dropped the bag and a few things did fall out—"

"Must be inside still," Jed offered. He picked up the blue bag and turned it upside down. "You don't mean this?" He picked up a small brown leather purse.

"That's my change purse. I mean my blue leather wallet. I'd just drawn my pension—"

"She was just telling me she hadn't any money in the house," Lennie protested. "Tell you the truth, I was trying to raise a quid to see me over the week-end, and she said she couldn't."

"You won't get away with this," panted Miss Bruce.

"You want to watch out, Jed, or she'll call the police. She was threatening to do that just before you arrived."

"Well, but you haven't got the wallet, have you?" said Jed.

"Don't talk silly," Lennie said. "I'll tell you what, Auntie—you don't mind me calling you Auntie? —I bet it was yesterday you drew out the pension and you'd forgotten."

"My Aunt Flo's like that," contributed Jed eagerly. "I've known her to ask me if it was Thursday or Friday. Fact. Poor old duck, she really didn't know. Now, look." He turned a coaxing face on the stricken Miss Bruce. "You've got another room—well, I can see you have—palatial place really, I couldn't help seeing all those doors. Now supposing I just take a peek—"

"Don't go near my bedroom," shouted Miss Bruce. "I drew the money this afternoon and I haven't left this room since I found your *friend* on the landing and we came in together."

"Well, I'll just take a squint," Jed insisted. "Len and me wouldn't like

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to leave you thinking we'd done you dirt. Are all these rooms yours?" he added respectfully, peering down the corridor. "Live on your owney-oh? You don't know your luck and that's a fact. Where I live in Camden Town it's two to a room when it isn't three. And you've got—how many rooms is it? —three—and all for just one person."

"I'm not interested in how people live in Camden Town," shouted Elizabeth, beginning to lose her head. "All I'm interested in—"

"Is your wallet. We know. But you ought to be interested. I mean, what's the good of all this talk about fair shares for everyone? It doesn't amount to a row of beans."

"You can say that again," agreed Lennie. "One of these days we'll get a Government with the guts to keep the residential part of big cities for the people who need the accommodation—that is, the people who work in them. The others will have to make way—"

"London happens to be my home."

"Mind you," Lennie continued, "I'm not one that calls all the old folk excess baggage, though with this population overspill, not just in this country but all over the world, there'll have to be some form of rationing sooner or later."

"Perhaps you'd like to see all people of pensionable age put down like a lot of old dogs," Elizabeth panted.

"You said it, not me. Mind you, if they're still able to work for the community that's another thing, but I was watching a program on the telly the other night, there was a doctor, he says we're supporting an army of synthetic beings, more machinery than human, not just false hair and teeth, but false lungs, hearts, guts—I mean, things are coming to a pass when the young have to sweat *their* guts out to support a lot of machines."

"You'd do it, too," said Elizabeth. "You'd press a button and a whole generation would be pulverized."

"I wouldn't be the first," Lennie reminded her, "and they weren't just old and useless mouths. It's no good trying to talk to Jed and my generation about the sanctity of human life, not after the concentration camps."

"And let's face it," added Jed. "A lot of old people are neither pleasure nor profit to themselves or anyone else. Nothing personal, you understand, only we're the ones who're going to be asked to carry the load."

Under the panic she was struggling so desperately to subdue she knew they were talking for talking's sake, that they were enjoying her distress. She was like some colored rubber ball they were tossing from one to the other, and her rage rose up again.

"Until that happens," she told them, "even the old have their rights. Will you please give me back my wallet and go?"

She didn't feel she'd ever think of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the apartment as home again, and yet it was all she had. It seemed little enough to show for so many years of working. Other people achieved a home life, children, success in their calling. She had done her work honorably and as well as she could, but she had been no different from thousands of others. Like as peas in a pod, she thought. Still, that this should be her harvest—

Jed came farther into the room. He shut the door and set his back against it.

"What was that about a wallet?" he asked softly. "You talk about this and that being your rights—you haven't done too badly if you ask me—and all me and Len have is our good names. And we're not going to have those long if you go round telling everyone we've stolen your wallet. Not that anyone would be silly enough to believe you. But mud sticks. All the same, we've nothing to hide, so go ahead and call the police. Yes, honestly, we'd like you to, wouldn't we, Len?"

"That's right," said Lennie.

Fear had her by the throat now. It was like fighting your way through smoke in a burning house.

"Come on," Lennie said. "And don't pretend the phone's out of order because I know it isn't."

"I just want you to *go*," she said. Never mind about the wallet, let them have it, she'd manage somehow.

"Come on," urged Lennie. He picked up the phone and held it out toward her. "Or does this happen regularly every Saturday? Don't you want to call them because you know they won't come?"

She put out her hand, taking a step in his direction. He didn't move, just casually stuck out a foot and over she went, grabbing at a chair in her fall. She never saw Jed move, but he must have because he quickly twisted the chair out of her reach. Down she went, a clumsy terrified old woman, sprawling on the rug, looking up to see those thin youthful faces creased with laughter.

She shut her eyes, and the next instant there was a tremendous crash and she uttered a cry. Lying in the hearth was her telephone, cracked and useless. Viciously Len lifted one foot and stamped on the pastel-colored receiver.

"You thank your stars that isn't you," he ground out at her. Her eyes slid this way and that. Their four feet surrounded her, like four black dangerous beasts, edging an inch or so nearer. A hideous expression she had read floated into her mind: putting in the boot. She'd never quite believed that anything human could make a savage deliberate attack on that delicate structre of bone and skin that houses the marvelous machinery of the brain. In imagination she already felt the blow and to her horror she heard herself give vent to another cry—like a bat's cry immensely magnified.

She pulled her arms over her face.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Even when one of them said, "Come on, get up, you can't lie there all day," she was afraid to place her hands on the floor, in case they stepped on her fingers. That was another torture she had read about.

"I don't know what her folks are doing, letting her live on her own like this," one young man remarked conversationally to the other. "She's some kind of a nut all right. What did she say when she found you here?"

"Begged me to come in," said Lennie. "Come in and help yourself, she said."

"Maybe she took a fancy to you," giggled Jed. "Takes them that way sometimes."

Still scarcely believing that this was really happening to her, Elizabeth made a supreme effort and stood up. Lennie gave her a rough hand, jerking her so that her head struck the mantelpiece.

Jed stepped forward. "Got some funny stuff here, hasn't she?" he observed, scrutinizing a print of Blake's Good and Evil Angels hanging beside the old French clock. "Downright indecent, exposing himself like that."

He unhooked the picture. The next instant he dropped it to the floor, set his foot on the glass and ground the print into the rug. "Lucky for you you haven't had the police here," he commented. "There's bad names for women like you."

"I'm sure you know them all," she panted, half sick with rage. That print was the last present Beatrice had given her.

"Better sweep that up before you start cutting yourself and rush into the street telling everyone you've been attacked," Len commanded. "Well, go on."

He gave her a push and she staggered into the kitchen to find a dustpan and broom. When she stooped to clear up the debris he caught her shoulder and forced her to her knees. With his toe he kept indicating small fragments of glass she had overlooked. Her spirit broken at last, she could scarcely see through the floods of tears that cascaded down her cheeks. This, then, was what was meant by corruption, and it had all been achieved in less than an hour.

Once in a tropical climate she had watched a flower progress from the tightly curled bud to the withered bloom, petals shriveled, an epitome of death. If she had looked down and seen that her clothes had fallen from her she would scarcely have been surprised. Now they could have done anything they pleased with her, and she couldn't have lifted a finger to prevent them. She bent over at their feet, broken, lost . . .

Then unbelievably it was finished. She saw them pull themselves up from their lounging positions and slouch toward the door. As Lennie passed her armchair he stooped and picked the wallet from behind the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fat embroidered cushion. Jed looked about him, bright-eyed as a robin. His glance fell on her treasured transistor radio—he'd have no trouble getting rid of that before nightfall, cash down and no questions asked. He swung open a closet door and found her camera where she'd put it only yesterday, and he slipped that into his pocket.

"Coming, Len?"

"Bit risky, isn't it?" said Len. "I know her kind, probably first cousin to the Super at the local station house, and when it comes to telling a story, well, we know who's likely to be believed."

"You have something there," Jed agreed. He wandered away and Elizabeth heard him opening the door of her bedroom. So nothing, nothing was to remain sacred. She heard her craven voice whisper, "You can't imagine I'd tell anyone —*anyone*—" What you've reduced me to, she meant. Len looked at her thoughtfully.

"Ah, but we don't really know that, do we? You've told us so many lies—" His glance fell on a little Dresden Psyche and Cupid in the china cabinet.

"There's another," he said. "All this nudity—"

He tugged at the cabinet door, but luckily it stuck and before he could smash that too, Jed had come back with a black volume in his hand. Elizabeth gave a gasp when she saw it was her father's Bible. She remembered the good old man studying it year after year, carefully pasting back the loose leaves—as a child she had loved to be allowed to handle it, fascinated by its colored maps—the Promised Land in pink and green, the Journeys of St. Paul in yellow and brown, St. John on the Isle of Patmos, an old man with a long white beard, a blue robe and a pink scarf, gazing into the clouds.

"This should do the trick," said Jed. "You understand about taking oaths, I suppose."

"Put my father's Bible down," she whispered.

"One minute and you're welcome." He caught her hand and jammed it up against the worn black cover. "Now then, you repeat after me. I do solemnly swear—"

"There's no need," she assured him, outraged that such a book should be used for this dishonorable purpose. "I wouldn't let anyone know you'd been here—"

"Watch it," warned Jed, "or we might have to rough you up yet. Now, I do solemnly swear—"

"I do solemnly swear . . . Oh, Father, forgive . . ."

That ceremony finished, Jed tossed the book disdainfully toward the table, from which it fell to the floor.

"And if you should get any ideas about it not being binding or anything like that," he warned her, "don't think we won't know about it. We have friends, and they'll be watching you."

She heard their laughter as they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ran down the stairs as lightly as though their feet and their consciences alike were made of thistledown. Her first coherent thought, when she began to pull herself together, was, "All that for the sake of twenty pounds in cash and another ten at most for the radio and the camera."

It seemed a staggering sense of values.

The second invasion came several days later.

During the interval she hadn't been idle. Sunday she had stayed at home, unable to face neighbors at the parish church, or lunch at the Green Laurel Café where she always went on Sundays and invariably saw someone she knew. The broken telephone was a boon in a way because it meant no one could reach her on the phone. She didn't have to fight the temptation to go round to the police—it didn't even occur to her to do such a thing.

On Monday the man came to repair her instrument. "I fell," she explained. "I was changing over a picture and I caught my foot in the cord. I broke the picture frame, too."

"Some fall," said the repairman drily. "Looks more as if you'd chucked it at a burglar."

On Monday she stripped all the covers off the chairs, took down the curtains, rolled up the rug where she had sprawled and gibbered and wept. She phoned the local trash collector to say she was having her furniture redone and had some quite good rejects. I'm changing the color scheme, she explained. It wasn't anyone she knew, so no questions were asked. She lugged the bundle down to the hall and some men came round with a cart and collected it the next day.

She went to the Do-It-Yourself shop and bought cans of paint and a roller and covered the charming Regency wallpaper. She preferred wallpaper, but she couldn't manage to hang new wallpaper by herself. Besides, paint would change the appearance of the room even more.

She shifted the furniture to give the room a completely different appearance. She and Beatrice had decorated it one summer when they couldn't afford a foreign holiday—it gave them a spurious impression of being in a new place; she bought a Redoute print of camellias to replace the Blake, and a new rug in a Swedish design. Then she made up her mind to put the whole matter behind her.

"Life's for living, not for remembering," her father used to say. "People who spend their time looking over their shoulders fall over their own feet."

When the bell rang on that second occasion she answered quite tranquilly on the intercom.

"This is the C.I.D.," said a voice, "making some routine inquiries. May we come up, please?"

She pressed the catch automati-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cally, heard the door click open. Two men came running up the stairs, one tall and fair, the other short and dark. Both were smoking cigarettes.

"Miss Bruce?" said the fair one. "Do you mind?" He indicated the cigarette.

"Of course not." She led them into the living room, found them an ashtray.

"We're asking about two men who may have been in this neighborhood on the afternoon of Saturday the fourteenth," said the fair man. "To begin with, can you remember what you were doing that day?"

"If it was a Saturday I would have been shopping and then—I generally watch television if there's anything that interests me."

The man nodded. "That's what they all say. Do the names of Harvey and Dent suggest anything to you?"

She shook her head. "No."

"Do you know anyone called Mrs. Miller?"

She almost gasped before she shook her head. Here was a development she hadn't anticipated. She realized now that this was what the young ruffians had had in mind; they hadn't expected her to go to the police—it would take more courage than most people possess to publicize the events of that hideous afternoon. She had a vision of herself crawling round the carpet, utterly demoralized; then she saw herself standing up in court answering questions—that was why they had exacted her promise.

"Who is this person called Mrs. Miller?" she asked as casually as she could.

"We have reason to believe these men were asking for her."

"Then couldn't she . . . ?" Answer your questions, she meant.

"We haven't traced her yet. What's more, we haven't found anyone who recognizes the name, or remembers the young men, not in that particular connection."

She said bluntly, "What have they done? I mean, they must have done something or you wouldn't be here."

The fair man said pleasantly. "We're just trying to trace their movements. We're asking everybody on the street, in case anyone can be of assistance."

I ought to tell them, she thought; *it's my duty.* It was also her opportunity for revenge, but she tried to suppress that feeling. Only there was her oath. But oaths made under duress aren't binding, she was sure she had heard that somewhere. And these two were enemies of society. It had been she on the 14th, it could be someone else this coming Saturday and the Saturday after.

All the same, she hesitated. She remembered hearing her father say once, "The Christian's great problem is not the conflict of right and wrong—that should be no problem at all, since he knows on whose side

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he is fighting; his problem is the precedence of one right over another." Perjury is a mortal sin. All promises, her father had believed, are sacred to the person of honor. But her promise had been made under duress, she persisted.

It was as though the old man stood in the room, watching, and she was talking to him. "No promise can be broken with impunity." How she remembered those clear incisive tones. "If a promise is wrong to keep it was wrong to make it in the first place. You took the oath on the Word of God, and God is not mocked."

She didn't need to ask what he would have done; he would have let them smash him before he'd have given them his word on the Book. Nevertheless, even saints can make mistakes.

"You've remembered something," said a soft voice. Her head came up with a jerk, just in time to see the glance that passed between the two men. She leaned back, half fainting. How could she have been so blind? This was a trap and she had almost walked into it. Now she could hear those cruel, hateful voices, replacing the soft one. *We have friends, and they'll be watching you.*

"Yes, Miss Bruce?" It was the dark man speaking. "If you can help us, it's your duty."

"I was thinking," she said breathlessly. "The fourteenth—that was the Saturday I had to do my shopping in the afternoon, because I stayed in that morning for the man who was delivering a table—the table at your elbow actually."

"So you wouldn't remember—"

"You can't remember something you don't know."

Had she been quick enough? Had she pulled the wool over their eyes? If she'd told them, it wouldn't have stopped at private humiliation this time.

"I can't tell you anything," she said, pleading, intent.

The relief when she realized they were going to accept her word was so overwhelming that she nearly passed out again. They stood up, turning toward the door.

"I'm sorry I couldn't help you," she faltered.

"You have," said the fair man. "If no one saw them in this neighborhood, then it's not likely they were here. We had to check."

"Yes, I see that," she agreed.

At the door they turned. It was the fair man who had the last word. "By the way, Miss Bruce, next time two strangers in plain clothes come to the door and tell you they're police officers, ask to see their identification. You've a perfect right to ask and we prefer it. After all, you had no proof we were members of the C.I.D."

He put his hand in his pocket and drew out a little leather case. "Have you ever seen a police identification? And another thing—it might be a good idea, seeing you live alone—you do live alone, I believe?" She

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nodded. "A good idea to have a chain fixed on the inside of the door. Then if you do get any ugly customers, at least you have a sporting chance. If Miss Trent had had a chain—"

"Miss Trent?" Her senses were reeling.

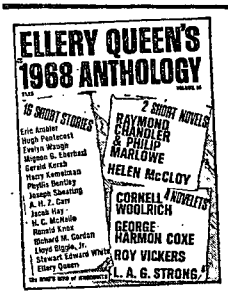
"She's an elderly lady living in the Marylebone district who was attacked by two young men answering the description of Harvey and Dent on the afternoon of Saturday the fourteenth. If, as they claim, they were asking for a Mrs. Miller in Kensington at the time the two assailants were seen leaving Miss Trent's flat, well, then, we've got our eye on the wrong chaps. But since we can't get any confirmation—"

"But Miss Trent would know them again?"

"No. She happens to be blind, and unfortunately her companion was out at the time. Well, don't forget about the chain, Miss Bruce, and we're sorry to have disturbed you."

She heard the front door close, then a car door slam. She turned and looked back at her transformed room. "I couldn't tell them," she pleaded. "You made me swear. You made me swear on the Word of God, and God is not mocked."

The room, in its fresh paint, looked clear and unaccusing. Automatically she emptied the ashtray and shook up the cushions. Then she went into the kitchen to fill the kettle and make herself a cup of tea.



For the best in mystery reading

ELLERY QUEEN'S
1968 ANTHOLOGY
$1.25 per copy

ELLERY QUEEN'S ANTHOLOGY / 505 PARK AVE. / NEW YORK, N. Y. 10022

Please send me _____ copies of ELLERY QUEEN'S 1968 ANTHOLOGY—Volume 14. I am enclosing $1.25 for each copy, plus $.25 for postage and handling.

EQ-12-67

Name _____
(Please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED

Rates $1.00 per Word

ADDITIONAL INCOME

MAKE Your Classified Ad Pay. Get "How To Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad. Send $1.00 to C. D. Wilson, Science & Mechanics, 505 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

I MADE $40,000.00 Year by Mailorder! Helped others make money! Start with $10.00 —Free Proof! Torrey, Box 318-T, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197.

FREE Book "990 Successful Little-Known Business." Fascinating! Work home! Plymouth 111-P, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11218.

EARTHWORMS

BIG Money Raising Fishworms and Crickets. Free literature. Carter Farm-O, Plains, Georgia 31780.

FOR SALE—MISCELLANEOUS

MAGNETS. All types. Specials — 20 disc magnets, or 2 stick magnets, or 8 assorted magnets, or 10 small bar magnets, $1.00. Maryland Magnet Company, 5412-X Gist, Baltimore, Md. 21215.

FORMULAS & TRADE SECRETS

ANYTHING Analysed—Professional Chemist. Johnson Laboratory, Delaware Turnpike, Delmar, New York 12054.

PERSONAL

BILL problems? Poor credit no trouble. Not a loan company. Send for free application. Automatic Acceptance, 318DC Broadway Blvd., Reno, Nev. 89502 or 307DC Pocasset Ave., Providence, R. I. 02909.

RARE BOOKS

Out of print mysteries? Our specialty. Aardvarks Book Detectives, Box 1749, Orlando, Fla. 32802.

REMAILING SERVICE

ARIZONA Remails 25¢. Monthly $3.00. Jay Brown, 665 Pima, Coolidge, Ariz. 85228.

STAMP COLLECTING

FREE Literature! Samples: Stamps. Amazing Booklet. Views 30¢. Large Stamp Assortment $1.00. Persil, 436 New York Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y. 11225.

MONEY TROUBLES?

Nobody Refused up to $20,000.00

Bad Credit is No Problem ■ Not a Loan Co.

Strictly confidential — A plan for everyone

We Can Help You — TODAY

Send your name and address for FREE application

ATLANTIC ASSOCIATES, Dept. 95

3312 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85012

146 Westminster St., Providence, Rhode Island 02903

EQMM's Magazine Rack for many interests

CAMPING JOURNAL 75¢—Edited for the camper, fisherman, hunter, boatman, hiker, and others who vacation in the out-of-doors.

INCOME OPPORTUNITIES 75¢—A bi-monthly professionally edited magazine for those persons desirous of going into business for themselves.

MOBILE LIFE 50¢—For present owners and prospective buyers of travel trailers, pick-up campers and mobile homes.

HI-FI BUYERS' GUIDE—$1.00—A new magazine supplying comprehensive, independently conducted test reports on hi-fi components. Features articles on editor-recommended complete systems.

FURNITURE—75¢—Edited for anyone who wants the satisfaction and economy of building, repairing, finishing and maintaining the furnishings of his home.

KITCHEN & BATH—75¢—Idea book for redoing or adding to these two most expensive room in the house, economically and beautifully.

DAVIS PUBLICATIONS EQ-12-67
505 Park Avenue/New York, N. Y./10022

Please send me the latest copy of the magazine(s) I have indicated. I am adding 25¢ to the price indicated to cover postage & handling.

☐ Camping Journal, 75¢ ☐ Mobile LIFE, 50¢
☐ Income Opportunities, 75¢ ☐ Furniture, 75¢
☐ Hi-Fi Buyers' Guide, $1.00
☐ Kitchen & Bath, 75¢

Name .....
(please print)
Address .....
City ..... State ..... Zip .....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH

recommended by ANTHONY BOUCHER

As an editor, Ellery Queen can excel both in the expected and in the unexpected. Completely as expected is ELLERY QUEEN'S 1968 ANTHOLOGY (Davis, $1.25), 14th in this series of grand big (150,000 words) joyful paperback collections from EQMM's back files, this time with 22 stories, including short gems by Richard M. Gordon and Jacob Hay and meaty longer pieces by Helen McCloy, Raymond Chandler and Roy Vickers. For the nobly unexpected, see the bottom of this page.

★★★★ **MURDER FANTASTICAL, *by Patricia Moyes*** (Holt, Rinehart, $3.95)

The Golden Age is still with us in this delightfully British novel, complete with landed eccentrics, village fête, crossword puzzles, subtly clued murder problem, and Chief Inspector Henry Tibbett.

★★★★ **SOMETHING WRONG, *by Elizabeth Linington*** (Harper & Row, $4.95)

Wilcox St. precinct, L.A.P.D., face an odd group of cases which pose the problem of whether harm results more from evil or from stupidity. Distinguished procedural, with uncommonly realistic view of motives.

★★★★ **A PARADE OF COCKEYED CREATURES *or* DID SOMEONE MURDER OUR WANDERING BOY?, *by George Baxt*** (Random, $4.50)

Far-out mystery-of-the-absurd, yet tightly plotted and acutely told, and surprisingly warm in its affection for human absurdity.

★★★ **THE DOUBLE AGENT, *by John Bingham*** (Dutton, $3.95)

Dry, powerful, convincing espionage intrigue in the le Carré vein, runner-up for the Crime Writers Association's novel-of-the-year award.

★★★ **CAST A YELLOW SHADOW, *by Ross Thomas*** (Morrow, $4.50)

Well-twisted and surprising assassination-adventure, almost as good as Thomas' Edgar-winning first, THE COLD SWAP (now Avon S302, 60¢).

Who expects an anthology of 23 crime stories by eminent poets of the English language, from Chaucer to Dylan Thomas? ELLERY QUEEN'S POETIC JUSTICE (New American Library, $7.95) is the first of Queen's special patterned anthologies in 17 years, and a noble one, in which even a bad story takes on acute interest from its author, and most of the stories are very good.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHY GIVE

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

FOR CHRISTMAS?

- There's really no mystery about it at all!
- There just isn't any other mystery magazine that publishes every month the high-quality fiction from the world's leading mystery writers as ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE does. You'll find such authors as Erle Stanley Gardner, Agatha Christie, Rex Stout, John Dickson Carr, Charlotte Armstrong, and others, plus those bright new talents that are sure to become recognized masters in the years ahead. You'll also find Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners like John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner.
- So if you know of someone whom you would like to surprise with a thoughtful Christmas gift, then surprise him or her with a gift subscription to ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE.
- Gift cards in your name will be mailed just before Christmas and before they receive their first issue. For your convenience use the attached postage-paid order form. And if you wish, you needn't pay now. We'll bill you later.

SPECIAL LOW GIFT RATES

One—1 year gift subscription—$6.00 For each additional 1 year gift subscription—$5.00

Please enter the following gift subscriptions

Send to:

Name _____ ☐ Check if renewal
(please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Gift card signed _____

Name _____ ☐ Check if renewal
(please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Gift card signed _____

My Name _____
(please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

☐ BILL ME LATER

Name _____ ☐ Check if renewal
(please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Gift card signed _____

☐ I enclose $_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a new story by

CHARLOTTE ARMSTRONG

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	CHARLOTTE ARMSTRONG
TITLE:	*More Than One Kind of Luck*
TYPE:	Crime and Detection
LOCALE:	United States
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Charles Castle was not really a con man—he was something far more deadly. And Mimi Meade was not really a foolish old woman . . . or was she?*

THE BEARDED MAN WAS SPRAWLED on a sofa in the sitting room of Suite 209 at the Belmont Hotel. His full red lips moved greedily to suck in a green grape; the beard moved as his teeth crushed it. He was not an old man.

"I'm only asking you to move faster, Chic," said his visitor, a neutral-looking man called Johnson. "Because I can't stand the pace. It's costing too much," he complained. "You don't seem to realize. I don't live in any suite like this. I should start getting a little return on my investment. If you asked me up here to tell me there's another delay . . ."

The bearded man, who was calling himself Charles Castle, spat out a grape seed.

"I'm not trying to pressure you because I want to," said Johnson. "It's just a fact of life. The capital is running out."

"If you'd lay off the horses, the facts of life wouldn't be so limiting," said Castle sourly.

"Never mind what I do. What's holding you up this time?"

"I can't stand the old crow's conversation," Castle said, and his eyes flashed rage.

"For the profit in this, you should be able to stand anything."

"You can talk—you're capital.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'm labor." The man with the beard grinned, but there was no improvement in his mood. His personality was thunderous this Saturday morning.

Johnson's quiet voice took on a nasty edge. "You were in a bad spot, Chic. On the run. Broke. Nobody to turn to. Now you stand to live in luxury the rest of your life. What's wrong with that?"

"That's how it looks to you, eh? You want to know how it looks to me?"

The other did not, but he resigned himself to being told.

"You put up the money for this set-up because I've got to live comfortably and make it look good—the hotel, the clothes, the price of the dinners and shows. Right?"

"That's right."

"And what do I put in?" said Castle. "My time. My trouble. My charm. I have to be there. I have to look at her. I have to listen to her conversation. Right?"

"For two million dollars."

"Which, in order to get, I have to marry her. So then you get your money back, plus interest—plenty of interest. That's how it looks to you." He ripped grapes off the stem. "But to me, that's where it goes sour."

"What's so sour?"

"Because marrying the old bag means I have to keep on putting in my time, my trouble, my *person*. The labor, Johnson. The labor. You keep collecting but where am I? I'm in a cage. I'm the gilded bird. I wouldn't be able to take it." His strong teeth mutilated the innocent fruit.

"Listen," said Johnson wearily. "We agreed, didn't we?"

Castle sat up. "Makes no difference what we agreed," he said viciously. "I'd kill her in two weeks." He glared at the wall. "I mean that. I know myself, Johnson. I'd strangle her. I wouldn't be able to help myself." The hands that he held out were ready now.

Johnson's undistinguished countenance turned bleak. He knew the truth when he heard it.

Castle got up and took a tighter hitch on the sash of his deep-red dressing gown. "You'll agree that wouldn't get us anywhere. If I marry Mrs. Meade and then kill her, which is what would happen, it's going to be obvious. The cops will catch on, very quickly, to the fact that she had no charm and I had no money." His mouth sneered in its frame of hair. "You don't think I'd inherit, do you? You don't think I'd be left loose to keep slipping along those little payments to you?"

Johnson's face was long. "Why you had to take such a dislike to her, I don't know. You should get over it, Chic," he pleaded. "Think of what she's worth. Be times you'd like to choke her, sure. But for two million dollars—"

"No." Castle took a turn on the carpet and swung around. "I wasn't built for bars and I'm not going

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to walk into a cage. I just don't kid myself. I can't stand her." His eyes glittered. "The way I feel, I doubt if I can trust myself even to take her to lunch today, as I'm supposed to do."

"Don't take her to lunch, then," said Johnson hoarsely. "But you'll have to check out of here."

"Now, now, now," said Castle. "I didn't get you up here to say I was quitting. How would it be if we dropped the original idea and I just took the diamonds? Give us both a return on our investment."

Johnson swallowed. "You got to know the ropes, Chic. You never was a jewel thief."

"It's okay with you if I do? Be better than a total loss."

"Okay, if you could get away with it," began Johnson nervously, "but—"

"Same split?"

"What do you mean the same split," said Johnson indignantly. "I was willing to settle for a percentage on a steady income deal, but this would be one haul, Chic, a one-shot."

"Half?"

"You're getting generous with what you haven't got," said Johnson bitterly. "You got a plan how you can get away with the diamonds?"

"We have tickets to the concert tonight," Castle said briskly. "Dressy affair. She's getting the diamonds from the bank right now. She'll have the necklace, the earrings, the tiara—the works—hung on her for the occasion."

"Well?"

"So I remove same."

"How?"

"Leave that to me." Castle's eyes were hooded.

"Then you'll run? With that beard?" Johnson said sharply. "They'd pick you up in half an hour."

"Oh, I have that worked out. All I'll need is a little help from you at the right moment."

Johnson stiffened. "Listen, Chic, just because I saw a little opportunity here with this rich old dame, and I took a little gamble, that don't mean . . ."

"I know where to turn the stones to cash. A safe connection."

"It's too dangerous, Chic."

"Listen. Two days ago she announced our engagement, didn't she? Fifty old hens cackling, and me in the middle." Castle shuddered. "They know I stand to gain the two million *and* the diamonds. Everybody knows that. Right?"

Johnson didn't say anything. His face turned bleaker.

"So somebody robs her. So it's my loss, too, isn't it? Do I get suspected?"

Johnson's mouth smiled without humor.

"And if I've got a perfect alibi for the time of the robbery as well . . . There is where you can do some good." Castle sat down suddenly and leaned back. "Of course, if you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

don't like it . . ." He shrugged. But he watched.

The other man thought a while. His lashes worked rapidly. Then he said in a cool thin voice, "I'm interested in a return on my money. But not prison."

"Nobody's going to prison."

"No? What's with her all the time you're taking the jewelry off her? Is she blind? Can't she squawk?"

"There's no danger," said Charles Castle impatiently.

"How," said Johnson, "do you figure that?"

There was time out. Then the man with the beard said coldly, "Because she won't be able to squawk."

"I thought so," said Johnson in the same thin voice. "You're no con man. You're a killer. I should have known."

"I can't run," said Castle savagely. "You said so yourself. I know how to take the diamonds and leave nobody talking. All you have to do is help out with the alibi."

Johnson shook his head.

"So you want to wash it up as of now?" Castle fingered the grapes. "Take the loss? Forget it?" He fell back on the sofa and stretched his long legs. "Okay, I can do without you." He thumb-brushed the bloom off a grapeskin. "Won't be so safe, of course. And if I'm caught, you're in for a *little* bother . . ."

The other man began to perceive that he had better protect his investment. He said mildly, "What do you think the diamonds would bring, Chic?"

Charles Castle smiled in his beard.

A little after two o'clock that afternoon Mrs. Lydia Coonley, Mrs. Mimi Meade's housekeeper, neat in her black-and-white, opened the door for Mrs. Meade and her escort.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Coonley," the escort said.

"Afternoon, Mr. Castle." Mrs. Coonley nodded to Gustav, the chauffeur, who followed his mistress carrying a black, suede-covered box. Mrs. Coonley's round blue eyes turned in her plump fresh-colored face, and her small pink mouth tightened as she took it from him. Gustav stepped back to wait passively beside the door.

Charles Castle's voice sweetened. "Forgive me if I must hurry away so early, Mimi darling." Mrs. Coonley watched the beard bend to the freckled claw of her employer. "If I'm to dine here," said Castle, "there are some dull matters I must attend to."

"White tie, Charles," Mrs. Meade said in her piercing soprano. She was a bit hard of hearing.

"If you say so." He was a foot taller than his fiancée, and looked twenty years younger.

Her head with its dyed-black hair lifted, and her faded eyes looked up a little blindly at his splendor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You are the *best*-looking thing, Charles," she screamed. "You'll look so distinguished! I'll wear green."

"Ah," he said, "thank you. White roses, if I can find them?"

"You spoil me."

"I try."

"Let Gustav run you back downtown. Shall I send the car again at seven?"

"You spoil *me*, you know."

"I enjoy it," she shrieked. "Until seven, then. Oh, wait. Lydia," said Mrs. Meade to her housekeeper, "you have the box. Would you fetch the key? Charles, do let me show you my pretty beads and things."

"Diamonds?" he said, rather coolly. His eye flicked to Mrs. Coonley's face. "No, dearest. They'll have no character in the box. Can't I wait to see them properly? When you wear them this evening?" Mimi's chin drew in with her pleasure. "Now I must rush, if you'll forgive me."

Mimi forgave him. Her vague eyes let him go. He went briskly, not forgetting to say, "Good afternoon, Mrs. Coonley," as he left, followed by Gustav.

Mimi sighed. "I think I'll go straight up. A massage, Lydia? And then a nap. I must look as well as I can. The diamonds will help. Bring the box, dear." She sighed again and set her aching old foot in the high-heeled sandal on the stair. "I'm an old fool, Lydia," she remarked, "but I must say I've never had so much fun for my money."

Lydia Coonley's smile was fond. "Just so you're happy," she said, "and he isn't mean to you."

"Mean? Oh, no. Charles will never be mean to me."

Lydia's strong body was close as they climbed, as if to support and protect the older woman. "Mimi," she said in Mrs. Meade's ear, for they were excellent friends, "You don't really intend to marry him, do you?"

"No, no, although I'm sometimes tempted. But you can be sure," Mimi screeched confidently, "he'll never be mean to me unless I marry him."

"I hope," said Mrs. Coonley, "you won't change your mind about that. I worry . . ."

"There now, Lydia, you needn't," said her friend and employer. "I'm a rich old woman, and I shan't forget it. Though he is a gorgeous thing, Lydia, don't you think so?"

Lydia Coonley did not altogether agree, but she murmured, "I suppose I see what you mean."

Sometime later, Mrs. Coonley said urgently to her nephew, George, on the telephone, "I tell you it *is* important, George! Couldn't you find out anything?"

"Listen, Aunt Lydia, I'm a third-grade detective, not Sherlock Holmes. I asked around, and he isn't known."

"Charles Castle doesn't have to be his right name. Did you get your friend to look at him?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not yet."

"Will you do that, George? Please?"

"Inspector Cameron isn't my 'friend,' Aunt Lydia."

"Camera, I thought you called him."

"He's called that because of his camera eye—never forgets a face. Well, I asked him to take a look at this Charles Castle and he said he would. But I dunno *when,* Aunt Lydia."

"Get him to do it as soon as you can, George. I don't like to frighten Mrs. Meade, but I'm so afraid she'll marry him, and I honestly don't think she'd be able to handle him. It worries me a lot. They're eating here tonight and going to the concert. Use your influence, George, please?"

"Aunt Lydia, I've got no influence," said George patiently. "I can only ask Inspector Cameron again."

"That's a good boy."

Charles Castle dismissed the chauffeur at the far side of the small park. He told Gustav—establishing a precedent—that he would walk through the park to his hotel.

He had nothing more to attend to physically. The scheme was set, purchases carefully made, timing checked. All it needed now was a little brooding over the details of his own behavior. He walked restlessly in the small rain, ignored the hotel, and turned into the first barbershop he saw.

It seemed that only one man in the shop knew how to trim a beard, and he was busy. It was becoming a lost art, the chubby little proprietor told him. The proprietor said to a barber at the last chair, "You think you can take care of this gentleman?"

Charles Castle climbed into the chair and relaxed. "Make me look pretty," he said cheerfully. "Real pretty, for a lady."

"Yes, sir."

Tonight. At the concert. He would mention a headache to Mimi. Afterward, while Gustav was driving them back to her house, his headache would become "worse." On arrival there he would be "in great pain." Ask to be excused immediately. But set up in her mind the certainty that he would phone the moment he got to his suite. That meant she would be downstairs, waiting for his call—she disliked telephones because of her deafness and had no extension upstairs. Very good.

Next—if she offered, and she would—he would let Gustav drive him as far as the park. There he would use the headache again, tell Gustav he needed the air and would walk across the park to the hotel. Here he must watch the timing. It was his responsibility to see that it came out right. He would take care to impress the exact time on Gustav.

But he would not walk through the park to the hotel. He would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

get into the car already parked near where he intended to tell Gustav to let him out, and he would follow the chauffeur back to Mimi's house. Take care to see the man safely up her driveway and into the garage where he slept, too.

She'd be downstairs at the window where the phone was, waiting for his call. All he would need to do was to attract her attention through the windowpane. She would open the door for him herself. Just let her *see* him. He had full confidence in his power to wrap all this in the strong flavor of romance. Stricken with remorse for his rudeness in leaving her so abruptly. Returned to beg her pardon. And one last kiss.

But he must maneuver Mrs. Coonley out of the midnight picture.

In his absorption he had not heard what the barber—a slim, dark-eyed, nervous man—had been saying. Some complaint. The sense of it lingered. Castle roused himself. His eye traveled. "What happened to your mirror?" Now he could see a piece of cloth draped half over it.

"It just broke," the barber said, in a voice that grated. "What I'm telling you! I didn't do it! I absolutely didn't do it. He can't *say* I did it!"

"Just broke, eh?"

"I walk up to the chair. I'm standing here. Cra-ack. How could I have broke it?"

"Funny," said Castle genially. "Seven years' bad luck for somebody, so they say." He was not a superstitious man.

The scissors began to click in the barber's hand. Castle closed his eyes and concentrated on the problem of Mrs. Coonley. Suppose he were to hint to Mimi, before they left for the concert, that when they returned there would be some smooching? He shuddered. But it was bound to work. Surely Mimi would then order Coonley not to wait up. Coonley would obey, and her room was far from the entrance hall. And of course there was no need to shudder, because the smooching would not be of the kind that Mimi expected.

He did not know why he hated her so. It infuriated him that she swallowed his outrageous flattery so easily. Sometimes, in fact, he felt as if he were being deliberately lured into overplaying his part. Again and again he dismissed that idea. No, no, she was too vain and stupid.

His gorge rose, thinking of the silly old crow. She thought he would marry such-as-her? Or, contrarily, she thought she was toying with such-as-him? Either way, she would pay for it. Tonight. His hands under the barber's cloth were tight and eager. The diamonds hardly entered into his pleasure at all.

Yes, he thought, it was going to be very satisfying and very safe. A

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

perfect alibi, and apparently so much to lose. Oh, they would suspect him; quite automatically. But this would be quickly damped down by "the facts"...

That was when the feel of cold shears on his cheek made Castle sit up, roaring, in the chair.

"Oh, gentleman . . ." The barber stepped back, scissors clicking nervously. "I wasn't thinking . . ."

"You crazy or something?" the proprietor came bellowing. "The gentleman said 'Trim'!"

The barber looked half mad. "It was the mirror breaking. It wasn't me . . . Seven years' bad luck. Bad luck," he kept murmuring.

He had snipped one side of Castle's beard down to an almost invisible stubble.

As the other half of his beard was vanishing under the skillful hands of the proprietor himself, Charles Castle did not listen to the stream of apology, of gratitude for his "decency," of explanation. He was contemplating his personal disaster. He had got his rage under quick control. Don't impress anyone in the barber shop with the idea that the beard had been *important*. Be forbearing. Be reasonable. Be "decent." Be forgotten.

"Personally, there's no such thing as luck, good or bad, I say," the proprietor was babbling. "That's not scientific."

"That's right," Castle said absently.

When he hurried out of the shop into the afternoon rain, he tried to pull his naked face down into his jacket collar. What to do? He spotted a drug store, went in, and bought some of the covering paste that women use on blemishes. There was that intricate way to get up to his hotel room without being seen, and he used it.

At once, Castle tried to reach Johnson, who was staying in a cheap boarding house where the phone was a community affair, for emergencies only. A voice said that Mr. Johnson was not there. It seemed to the voice that Mr. Johnson had said something about going to the races. Something about he knew a horse that could run in the rain.

Castle gnashed and swore. He went into the bathroom and smeared the cosmetic over the blue birthmark which lay, shaped like Lake Champlain, along his jaw. The paste was concealing enough at a distance, and in a poor light. But...

Hell to pay! He had to go somewhere for a long time and lie very low. The pretty scheme, of course, was impossible now. No fooling around with the chauffeur, the headache, the timing—none of that driving back and forth. He would simply go into the house with her, and kill her, and run.

He dreaded the concert. Could he do it before they left the house? No, not with the servants awake and around. It had to be after the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

concert. But soon after. Quick attack, and flight. It was that and the diamonds. Or it was flight and nothing.

He tried the phone again with no better luck. He hoped angrily that Johnson was losing his shirt on the races. Finally he began to dress. The paste on his jaw was too conspicuous. He thought of a piece of adhesive tape. Then he thought not. The hell with it. Risk it. *Do* it.

His hands trembled. He tried the phone once more. Still no Johnson. Well, no matter. The old crow would die. He would run. Johnson would never see him—or any of the diamonds.

As she served the hors d'oeuvres, Mrs. Coonley's eyes were as round as onions. Mimi Meade kept looking at her fiancé in the merciful candlelight as if he were a stranger. "Oh, Charles," she screamed. "Why ever did you do that!"

"My darling, I did it to please you," he said gallantly. "Was I wrong?"

"You have a strong face. A very strong face," she shrieked. "But I did think your beard was distinguished-looking. I *am* sorry."

"Did you love me for my beard alone?" he teased, impatient for midnight and her throat.

Mimi laughed so raucously that all her diamonds shook. But he saw Mrs. Coonley's mouth make a pink button, and Castle received, intuitively, the news that now he could not marry the $2,000,000 dollars even if he wanted to. Beardless, the old crow wouldn't have him.

His rage turned hard as ice, and as cold.

After dinner, holding Mimi's wrap, he whispered that there were things to discuss, intimate plans to be made, decisions to be taken. Could they be alone when they got back from the concert? He thought she stiffened at his word "decisions." But she screeched to Mrs. Coonley, docilely enough, her injunction not to wait up.

He was satisfied. When they returned here, he would give the burly chauffeur a good quarter of an hour to lock the garage and be off to bed. If Mrs. Coonley disobeyed her employer and waited up, why, it would be easy enough to get rid of her, too. What was one more?

"Good night, sir and ma'am," Mrs. Coonley said. "Enjoy the music."

"Thank you," Castle said. "Good night." His cold eyes slipped over the housekeeper's face and he smiled.

When they had gone, Mrs. Coonley sighed deeply. "Well," she said aloud.

As she went about turning off lights, preparing to go to her room, the phone rang. "Aunt Lydia?"

"Oh, George."

She sounded as if she couldn't quite place him for a moment, George thought. "I got Inspector

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cameron to promise he'll meet me after his poker game tonight. So where will this guy Castle be around midnight?"

"Oh. Oh, yes, let me see. Why, I suppose he'll be getting back to his hotel about then. The Belmont."

"Okay. We'll be hanging around the lobby."

"Good boy," said his aunt absently. "But I think everything's going to be all right anyway, George."

"What's that?"

"She's going to break the engagement."

"She is?"

"Oh, I'm positive she will. He's shaved off his beard." George's Aunt Lydia gave a little giggle. "Mrs. Meade is all upset. Now he looks thirty years younger than she, instead of twenty. She'll never marry him."

"Then you mean," said George in distress, "I've been hounding Inspector Cameron—?"

"I think he's got something smeared on his face," his aunt went on happily. "Looks as if he's trying to hide a scar that was under the beard before. You better see if your friend knows his real name, Georgie. Now I'm *positive* he's a criminal."

"Well," said George, sounding dubious, "okay then."

The concert was a success. There were encores. Then the audience, dressed to the teeth, left the hall very slowly, bowing and preening its fine feathers. Mimi seemed annoyed that Charles, much less flamboyant and forceful than usual, did not clear her way, but let her be buffeted with the rest. They found Gustav and the car, and rode in silence.

It was not quite midnight when the car pulled up under Mrs. Meade's porte cochère. She had been thinking of Samson. "Charles," she said decisively, "you must come in. Shall we let Gustav go to bed? You can call a cab later. We must have a talk."

"Yes," Castle said. "Of course. By all means!"

Dectective George Coonley leaned on the desk at the Belmont. Inspector Cameron, stolid beside him, was letting George do it. "Charles Castle hasn't come in yet, has he?" George inquired.

"Yes, sir," the man said promptly. "Just about five minutes ago. I saw him starting up the stairs. He always walks up—his room is only one flight up."

George felt terrible. He squinted unhappily toward the stairway. (The great Cameron doing him this favor, and they were too late! George felt young and green and futile.) "Are you sure?" he demanded with a desperate ferocity. "Absolutely *sure* it was Castle you saw? That stairway is pretty far from the desk here."

"Positive," said the man. "He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gave me the salute he always gives. Anyhow, I couldn't miss that beard of his."

George Coonley was young and green, but he was not stupid. Even as the great Cameron had already begun to turn away, George stiffened.

"What beard?" he asked.

Mimi Meade felt the cruel thumbs striking into her flesh. She saw, as her frantic old hands pushed and slipped on the grim jaw, the blue mark emerging. She lost the light . . .

Mrs. Coonley, on the stairs, didn't scream. She ran down toward the hammering shadows assaulting the front door. Then George was inside, bending the killer's left arm impossibly backward. Lydia Coonley caught Mrs. Meade's falling, but breathing, body.

Inspector Cameron said, "Birthmark. Yep. This is Chic Hutt from Boston. Wanted for murder."

"Now that we got him," panted George, "how about calling the Belmont, sir—see if they got whoever was giving him the alibi with the beard?"

"You hardly ever see a beard nowadays," croaked Mimi Meade, pulling at her necklace—some of the diamonds were embedded in her flesh. "My father used to wear a beard . . ."

"Hush," said Lydia Coonley. "I've called the doctor. I'll get you to bed." (A fuss will be made, her manner promised fondly.) "George," she beamed at her nephew, "I'm real proud of you."

George shushed her. Inspector Cameron was on the phone.

"Got his alibi man," he said to George in a moment. "Horse-happy con artist named Johnson. He didn't know about the beard being gone. How come you cut it off?" the Inspector asked Chic Hutt. "Bad mistake, wasn't it?"

"Bad luck," growled Chic, alias Charles Castle.

Later, George, waiting beside Inspector Cameron at Headquarters, said, "Wasn't it luck, though? Nothing *but* luck?"

The Inspector said kindly, "You don't want to get confused, son—there's more than one kind of luck. 'Bad luck,' *he* said. But he forgot a couple of things. First, he didn't *have* to go ahead and try to murder the old lady. Second, any *innocent* man could have got his beard taken off by mistake, and no harm done to anyone. And what definitely *wasn't* luck at all, my boy, was that you were awful quick to see that bit about the beard."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Enjoy this story leisurely. Linger over the reading of it. We guarantee that it will grow on you . . .

The story takes its own slow time to unfold, but it is unusual in nearly every way—in manner of telling, in characters, in dialogue, in background (Latin-America) and "local color," in gradually released plot; and we think you will find the denouement, the answer to the riddle, the solution to the mystery, both surprising and satisfying. Altogether, a story that will stick firmly in your memory . . .

A QUESTION OF TRANSLATION

by G. C. EDMONDSON

HARRY'S REAL NAME IS HERODIAS Macklin but he sees less humor in it than his father did. He was trying to refute a way-out guess at a petroglyph which I'd dreamed up mainly to bug him. In the backseat our wives discussed the new botch look and whether it could be worn with a strapless bra. Harry winced at the way their Spanish *ess* transmuted the word into something like *brass ear*.

"Nothing to do with cartouches," he finally resumed. "It's simply a question of spelling. You know what one lost letter can do for a translation."

We left the newly graded road into the stelae we'd been digging for the last month and the highway changed abruptly into a bone shaker. Harry gripped the wheel and clenched his teeth. "Another fifty kilometers," he growled. "And after dark there'll be bandits."

"Uniformed or otherwise?"

"Both."

Cotton wagons rolled slowly down the highway, trailing behind a chuffing tractor. Bits of cotton flew off and lodged on our windshield. My friend turned on the squirt gun but linters adhered greasily to the wiper blades. While he drove with his head out the window I looked for a turnoff.

We crept another kilometer before the traffic thinned enough to pass. When we were abreast the tractor it swung abruptly left. Harry braked frantically and the cotton wagons missed us by millimeters. When we had pulled behind again, the tractor driver resumed his tortuous progress down the road. My friend glanced at me and shrugged.

"Too many witnesses to do the proper thing," I said.

"His way of saying 'Yankee go home'," a wife added from the back seat. We crawled another kilometer before the tractor finally turned off into a cotton gin.

"Even we experts have trouble in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terpreting simple texts," my friend continued, getting back to the petroglyph.

"Possibly," I said. "That's why earth-shaking discoveries are usually made not by the narrowed professional but by some gifted amateur."

"Quote me no Michael Ventris," Harry grunted. "I've had enough Linear 'B' to last through Purgatory." And this was odd, seeing that my friend's field was not Minoan but Mayan.

The gins and presses were now getting fewer and we began to see cotton fields stretching into the billiard-table distance.

"Could you turn that air conditioner up another notch?" a wife asked.

"It'll be worse when you have to get out."

"Speaking of which," another wife added.

My friend muttered in Quechu. It sounded like a gear box starting to seize. The road dropped suddenly into a gully hidden below the plain. Dust-covered *álamos* lined the canal from which new life was pumped into this desolate region.

"Look!" a wife said.

Resignedly Harry slowed the car. It was almost cool beneath the cottonwoods. A lone building stood on tiny concrete pyramids, its raw newness in perfect harmony with the neon sign which adorned its false front. We made our way to a table under the cottonwoods.

"Sí, señores?" a young man asked.

"Mineral water for my friend," I said. "The rest of us would like beer."

The young man hesitated a moment. *"Los señores son alemanes?"*

"No," Harry said. "We are not Germans but if you have some Münchener Löwenbräu—"

"Immediately."

I stared. "Do you suppose he really has it?"

"Country's booming. Anything's possible."

"Especially in the realm of mistranslation."

"Let the computers worry about it. Why should anyone translate petroglyphs in this heat?"

"Because they're there?" a wife asked.

The young man returned. My friend regarded the German beer wistfully but sipped his mineral water. Though primitive, everything showed evidence of youth and hope. Above all, it was clean.

"Do you suppose we could get something to eat?" a wife asked.

Harry threw up his hands. "We've got forty kilometers to make before dark!"

"And then?"

My friend was silent, thinking of the dismal accommodations in the next town. The young man passed by again, this time wearing a cap folded from a piece of white paper. "I never saw a cook wear a cap like that," a wife said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Nor I," I grunted. "That's what a printer folds from yesterday's edition."

The young man returned to our table. *"Desean algo más?"*

A wife frowned thoughtfully at his accent. "You are not a native," she finally declared.

The young man displayed brilliant teeth. "No, *señora,* I am Cuban."

"And you own this place?" I asked.

"Yo y mi señora."

I smiled inwardly at the "my lady." A native would have said "my wife" or "my old woman."

"My lady is preparing *mondongo,"* the young man hinted.

My friend gave me a questioning look.

"If I remember my Caribbean dialect, its *menudo* with potatoes."

"May we see?" a wife asked, and the Cuban escorted us inside.

The four tables and kitchen were all in plain view. I calculated the remainder of the building to be large enough for one bed. The Cuban's lady was tall. Long hair of that peculiarly buttery hue of the Latin blonde streamed over her shoulders as she stirred the pot. Her dress was almost concealed by an apron, yet she created a wave of such overpowering excitement that I looked quickly away. After several deep breaths I risked another peak. It was just as bad.

"Gad, if I were only seventy again," Harry muttered.

"What?" a wife asked.

"Nothing," he hastened. "It's pointless unless you speak Gaelic."

The Cuban's lady turned and was even more devastating. "Older than he is," a wife murmured in English.

"Aren't we all?" I sighed.

Mondongo turned out to be a Caribbean variation on the tripe and hominy soup which Mexicans regard as a specific against hangover. Even with the Cuban contribution of a few potatoes it's still an acquired taste. "I feel that I speak for everyone," Harry said.

"You have reason," the devastating one said. "Besides, it won't be ready for hours."

"What else can you give us?" a wife asked.

The Cuban in the paper hat chanted a list of equinoctial slops which I will not dignify by itemizing. I tried to remember something Antillean which would not be too different from our familiar Mexican cuisine. "Could you fix us a *picadillo?"* I finally asked.

"Picadillo," the devastating one said, giving a liquid twist to the *ells.* "Will you dine in here or outside?"

"Outside would be cooler," a wife said.

"And less frustrating," Harry murmured.

The devastating one's husband brought us fresh beer.

"Do the bandits bother you?" I asked.

"Not much."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Are they all Communists?" Harry asked.

The Cuban sighed. "I suppose so. Though I doubt if they know what the word means. Myself," he gave a wry smile, "I know."

"Ah," a wife said, "Then you haven't been here long?"

"Since Castro."

Tires crunched on gravel and a car pulled in. The door which opened my way said *Policía Federal de Caminos*. I glanced at the Cuban but he was smiling a sincere welcome. The fuzz sat at the next table and studied us covertly. They were tall reddish men with that sallowness which comes to Northern Europeans after three generations on the equator.

"How safe is the road after dark?" Harry asked.

"Not very," a cop said.

I gave the wives an I-told-you-so look.

"We'll eat fast," a wife said.

The Cuban's lady brought tossed salad just as Harry was fumbling for a match. *"Un cerillo, señor?"* she asked, and again I noted the odd way she managed her double *ell*. I had a sudden inspiration. *"Parla italiano?"*

"Rather poorly," she said. "I am also Cuban."

"If it's going to be dangerous after dark—" a wife began.

"Enjoy your meal," a cop said. "We'll escort you to the next *población*."

The Cuban cleared away plates and brought steaming bowls of *caldo*. "Just the thing," Harry muttered, staring at a dust devil which swirled in the heat beyond the *álamos*. We tackled it glumly but the soup's whole string beans, halved onions, and bits of corn still on the cob were very good.

"Too much *cilantro*," a wife muttered.

"Ditto for sour grapes," Harry said, and finished his bowl.

The young Cuban brought *picadillo*. This hashlike concoction of chopped meat, onions, tomato, and several kinds of chiles was infinitely superior to the native fare we'd been getting.

"You have done well by us," I said. "Are you happy here?"

The young man hesitated a moment. "It's better than Cuba."

I glanced again at his boxlike paper hat. "You were not always a restaurateur?"

"Hardly."

I glanced at his hands.

"You were a printer?"

"Am," he corrected.

"I know how Gutenberg's press worked," my friend said, "But I'm afraid I haven't mastered the intricacies of the linotype."

"That's only for small print," I said. "Headlines are still cast one time and used over and over just like old Johann did in that forty-two-lines-to-the-page job."

I caught the Cuban's lady looking at me with something like terror in her fathomless eyes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Some day I will print again," her young man said. "When the political situation changes. Meanwhile—" he waved at the raw, unpainted building and shrugged.

"How did you escape?" a wife asked.

The Cuban and his lady glanced at each other.

"That," my friend said forebodingly, "is probably a long story."

"He swam," a policeman said.

"And sailed," the other policeman added.

"There was some walking and running too," the Cuban said. "And a wedding."

Wives pricked up their ears. The policemen showed no signs of hurry, so I guessed we were in for it.

The Cuban brought a fresh round of Löwenbräu. He and his lady brought chairs from the next table.

"I didn't know anybody in the city," the young man began. "I was lucky and found a job with the old Italian printer. There was this large house at the top of the hill I used to pass every morning. At times she would be feeding the birds. One glimpse could make twelve hours of sweeping and sorting type endurable.

"I thought she was a servant. When I learned the big house belonged to the old Italian I worked for I began planning errands to get me into it. It was a high old place. Would've taken a mountain climber to get over the walls.

"I walked past it morning and night. Maybe once a week I would be rewarded with a glimpse of her. I was fourteen then. But living in the city I soon learned servant girls do not dress as she did. The boss's daughter would be a more difficult conquest, but I was young and had confidence. Then I learned of another—an impossible—obstacle."

"With love all things are possible," a wife murmured.

"Except divorce in a Catholic country," Harry said.

The young man was surprised. "How did you guess?"

"I'm a dirty old man," my friend said.

Wives made questioning noises.

"She was not the old man's daughter. She was his wife."

Wives looked uncomfortably at the landscape as the Cuban's lady emerged from the kitchen with bowls of *flan* which, if it were a trifle thicker, could have passed for custard.

"He was a Socialist," she said, taking up the narrative with a suspicious smoothness. "Times were bad for Socialists. The times of Mussolini. He started printing again in Cuba and in a year, when his Spanish was good enough, he started a second paper.

"He was in and out of jail for the next twenty years, feuding with each new government. During this time he married my sister. When she died I was fifteen. My parents were dead and I had no money. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

did me the kindness of marrying me."

She put down the plates and returned to fuss over pots in the minuscule kitchen.

"I wouldn't marry a man that much older," a wife said in English.

"Would you marry one that much younger?" Harry asked.

"I'll tell you when I know how it feels to be old or hungry or without hope," another wife said. The young man was approaching again.

"Men would appear at the print shop and closet themselves with the old man," the Cuban went on. "Sometimes they would come again. Often they did not."

"Is it unusual for customers to confer with a printer?" my friend asked.

"These were thin-faced men with burning eyes. When they wanted printing, the old man would stay late and do it himself. At first I used to help him—until I learned to read. One day I found a handbill in the street. I was going to ask somebody what it said when I saw the police. They were clubbing anyone who picked up a paper, so I threw mine away and ran."

The young Cuban removed our dishes and returned to the kitchen.

"Couldn't read! What was he doing in a print shop?" a wife asked.

"It's common for printers not to know the language they're setting," my friend said. "A proofreader once penciled 'This silly ass is dead!' next to a name he recognized and that's exactly how the Bombay telephone directory came out that year."

The Cuban's lady was back. "Came a time on our island when things were so bad that even people who never cared about politics were angry," she said. "Some days strange men brought gold. It would be about the house for a day and then disappear. Soon the government knew my husband was buying arms. They waited until much gold had been gathered."

"You know," the young Cuban said seriously, "people who sell machine guns do not want paper money. The blond bull-necked man in fisherman's clothes did not care from what country the coins came, but he would have only gold.

"One morning before daylight the government struck. Someone ran to warn the printers. One came to warn me where I was sleeping in the shop."

"Gave the old man a free night-watchman and saved you the price of a room," Harry murmured.

"He was a fool," the devastating blonde said, bestowing on her young husband a fond look. "Instead of running for the sierra he came to my house."

"I thought I might help," the Cuban said.

"And walked straight into the arms of the fuzz," I added.

"Not quite," the Cuban explained. "The house had a back staircase which was hard to find.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Many times I had carried bundles up it. It was up this staircase I now came to find police beating the old man. He was saying terrible things in Italian. At least, those I could understand were terrible. I was in shadow, thinking how I could rescue him and his lady when suddenly a hand held me by the collar. *'Dónde está el oro?'* a policeman roared.

"When I did not answer something hit my ear. I woke on the floor and a policeman was kicking me. In front of me lay the old Italian. His bald head was bloody and half of his scalp hung over one ear. *'Where is the gold?'* the policeman asked me again. When I could not tell he kicked me some more."

"I too was handled roughly," the Cuban's lady said. "Finally they locked us in one cell. There was no privacy or sanitation—only microphones. Since my husband had told me nothing, I could reveal nothing. I think the police finally understood this for they did not beat me as much as the men."

Harry eyed the cops at the next table. "If I were conducting this investigation," he began, "I'd point out that the lady was soon to become a widow and what she realized from her husband's estate would hinge largely on whether she could make him talk."

The cops raised eyebrows in professional greeting, but they said nothing.

"That was tried," the Cuban said. "Days passed and finally my lady was released. The house on the hill had been looted but she somehow brought us food. We could not talk because of the *micrófonos*. Anyhow, there was little to say."

"A great deal, I should think," Harry murmured.

"But little that could be said," I added. "The old man was dying. Your secret dreams were coming true, but not in quite the way you'd imagined."

The Cuban nodded somberly. "Weeks passed and the old man grew steadily worse. I and my lady tried to put his scalp back, but one ear disappeared in the swelling.

" 'Give us the gold,' guards taunted, 'and we'll bring a doctor.' But if the old man heard he gave no sign. Occasionally he roused to curse the god which permitted such people to live. But of the gold—"

"There was no gold," the blonde goddess said. "It went for arms and the arms were never delivered."

"No, never," the young man said. "If only we could have a little of it here—but the thieving guards got it."

"Ah?" Harry said.

"The old man knew he was dying. One day I leaned close to his ear. Guards fastened wires to me and turned on electricity until I told them what he said."

A cop at the next table sighed and gestured for another beer. "Don't do that sort of thing in this country," he said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The young Cuban bounced to his feet as young men do and brought beer for all of us. My friend sipped his mineral water. While the blonde goddess was bringing him fresh ice he asked, "What did the old man tell you?"

"I didn't ask but he told me anyhow," the Cuban said. "When my ear was next to his mouth he whispered, *'Stá na cassa alta'.*"

"In the *high house?*" a wife echoed.

"The one on the hill," the young man said.

My friend choked on his mineral water. *"Cassa alta?"* he finally repeated.

"Yes," the Cuban said. "The old man never lost his Italian accent."

Harry glanced at me. We looked at the blonde goddess whose fingers worked incessantly at the hem of her apron. There was silence for a moment until the Cuban continued.

"I was released after the old man died. There was nothing left in the house. The shop was now printing a paper which reflected the government's views on all subjects.

"I tried to find work at other presses but there was no place for me in Cuba. Nor for the Italian's widow. The gold—they got it, of course, even if they say they didn't. Maybe some thieving cop didn't turn it in, but they got it."

"I don't think so," a wife began. "Maybe there's a secret panel or—"

"No," I hastened. "They got it all right."

The blonde goddess favored me with a smile which would have crisped her husband had he seen it. The other wives did and the temperature went down ten degrees.

"Life is for the living," Harry said.

"Let the dead bury the dead," I added.

"It's getting late for platitudes," a wife said.

"I hadn't noticed."

"Let's go," another wife said.

It actually promised to be quite dark before we made the forty kilometers to the next safe town. I glanced at the cops and they were now waiting for us. The Cuban brought the check and Harry handed him a banknote. We were climbing into the car when the blonde goddess rushed out with change. "Keep it," my friend said.

"I cannot," she said in her oddly Italianate Spanish. "Already I owe you too much." Abruptly she seized my friend's hand and kissed it, then rushed back to the kitchen with her apron before her face.

My friend turned several shades of red and gunned the engine. We drove down the road with the *Policía Federal de Caminos* behind. I rolled up the windows and started the air conditioner. When I noticed the chill emanating from the back seat I turned it off.

"Now just what was that all about?" a wife asked.

"It's complicated," I began. "You'd have to speak Gaelic."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'll follow your story in English, French, or Spanish," the other wife said.

Harry sighed and accelerated so that the cops wouldn't have to eat so much dust. "Actually," he said, "you'd understand if you spoke Italian."

"I do," a wife said.

"With a Spanish accent, like everything else. What does *cassa alta* mean?"

"High house."

"*Casa alta*—with one *ess*—might mean that in Spanish," I said, "But Italians pronounce a single *ess* like that English *zee* you've never quite mastered. When in Rome *casa* and *cassa* sound different."

"Why do you dislike the poor woman?" Harry asked.

"Because she's young and pretty and I don't like the way you looked at her," a wife said with commendable honesty.

"We'll never see her again," I promised.

"All she asked was to be left in peace with a live husband," my friend continued. "Do you wish him dead?"

"There you go putting words in my mouth!" a wife flared.

"If he learns where that gold is he'll go back and try to get it. If he tries he'll get caught. If he gets caught, he'll be killed."

"And I suppose you know where the gold is?" a wife sneered.

"That girl was scared stiff we'd tell."

"I don't believe it," a wife said flatly.

I turned up the air conditioner and we drove another kilometer in silence.

"If you don't tell me I'll never speak to you again," a wife finally said.

"I'll tell you tomorrow morning when we're so far away it'll never make any difference," Harry promised.

And that chilled the air enough so that my friend and I got a good night's sleep even though the hotel didn't have air conditioning.

But the next morning, when we were miles above a blue Caribbean in the lounge of a jet where it wasn't the least bit steamy, the silent treatment persisted. Finally, after my friend had given up trying to drink airline coffee, he removed a paperback from his pocket and passed it to the nearest wife. "I understand Italian," she said.

"Look up *cassa*—with two *esses*," I suggested.

She thumbed through the Italian-Spanish dictionary. "That's funny. It says *caja*."

"Elementary," Harry said. "If you Spanish-speaking types would just learn to voice a *zee* once in a while you'd know *casa*, pronounced *caza*, means house in Italian. But *cassa* with a sharp *ess* equals *caja* in Spanish and 'case' or 'box' in English. The old man wasn't speaking mangled Spanish. He was telling where the gold was, and telling it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in pure Italian. When the boy told the girl what the old man said she also knew."

"Then why didn't she get it?" wives demanded.

"Being a year or two older, she also knew they'd both be promptly dead if they ever led the cops near the spot."

"*Cassa alta*—higher case, upper case. The upper case is the box in which the foundry type is kept. You know, they don't melt down foundry type every time it's used. The old man probably rubbed the type with mercury or somesuch so the gold color wouldn't show. Then he played *The Purloined Letter* gambit. Somewhere in Cuba a Communist paper is printing its headlines with type made of pure gold! And the nicest thing about it is, it's all a vile Capitalist plot."

Wives were silent and I knew they were remembering that raw little restaurant in the southeast corner of purgatory, thinking of all the creature comforts even a small amount of gold could buy.

"She's lost one husband," Harry said. "I didn't see her very anxious to try for two."

Wives continued looking thoughtfully at each other. A moment later the stewardess came into the lounge for the empty cups and nearly dropped her tray. I don't suppose she'd ever seen a couple of middle-aged men being kissed by that many wives all at once.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The newest counterespionage story about Rand, the Double-C man . . . "Remember the U-2 affair back in '60? How it wrecked the Paris summit conference? Well, history could repeat itself . . ."

THE SPY WHO DIDN'T EXIST

by EDWARD D. HOCH

LONDON IN THE AVERAGE SUMMER rarely recorded a temperature much above 80 degrees, and for that reason the mild heat wave of mid-July qualified as front page news in every paper. Rand even had to flip over to the second page of his tabloid to find news of the impending disarmament conference. He was in the midst of the article when Colonel Nelson buzzed him.

"Can you come down, Rand? We have a sticky one here."

"Certainly, sir." Rand glanced at the meager electric fan on his desk and decided it was a bit sticky here too. He understood that the offices of the C.I.A. in Washington were all air-conditioned, but then of course that was America.

Colonel Nelson was a gruff, businesslike man, the senior officer in charge of External Operations. Rand didn't much like him, but a session with Nelson always held out the promise of travel. Perhaps it would be to some cool place where Rand could conduct the business of Concealed Communications away from the unpleasant heat of London.

But it was not the usual Colonel Nelson who waited for him this morning; the man was obviously nervous and unsure of himself. "We've got a problem, Rand. A bad problem. The Prime Minister himself is deeply concerned."

Rand was not one to excite easily. He reached for his pack of American cigarettes and said, "Tell me about it."

"You know the disarmament conference is about to open here."

"Of course. I was just reading about it."

"Remember the U-2 affair back in '60? How it wrecked the Paris summit conference? Well, history could repeat itself this month—right here in London. The Russians have intercepted coded messages from a British agent called Beaver, operating out of the Black Sea city of Kerch. They're furious about it, and making threats. It seems one of the intercepted messages mentioned the assassination of certain Russian leaders."

"Have you contacted Beaver?"

Colonel Nelson turned up his hands in a gesture of utter helplessness. "I invented Beaver three years ago strictly for budgetary purposes. We have no agent in Kerch. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man who's sending those messages doesn't exist."

Rand leaned back in his chair. "I don't quite understand. You'd better explain that, sir." He'd never seen Nelson so shaken.

"You know the difficulties we have at times with Parliament, Rand. They always want to know where the money's going, and even in closed sessions we can't be too careful. We use a great many covers, as do the Americans, but on occasion I do have to produce a list of agents and their locations for a few top people in the Foreign Office. For their purposes the list is accurate enough, but to guard against an official becoming careless or an untrustworthy secretary, I have inserted a number of dummy agents, and changed the location and code names of others. The name Beaver, in Kerch, was one such dummy."

"And now he's come to life."

Colonel Nelson nodded grimly. "Exactly. Just at a time when it could ruin the disarmament talks. I need your help, Rand. I need Double-C on this."

"I gather there's a message to be deciphered."

"Yes, but not the ones Beaver sent. We have copies of those, of course. They're in a standard cipher we stopped using a year ago because we knew Moscow had broken it. None of our men would have used it today, but we'd never convince the Russians of that."

"How were they sent?"

"Over a secret radio frequency that we discontinued at the same time we stopped the cipher. The Russians must have kept on monitoring it, and they finally came up with something." Colonel Nelson passed a sheet of paper to Rand. "Here are the four messages."

Rand read them through quickly before returning the sheet. They appeared to be verifications of orders from London to carry out a series of political assassinations among Red leaders.

"I assume there's no truth in these," Rand said softly.

"None at all. It's pure fiction, a carefully planned attempt to embarrass the government at a time when the disarmament talks are about to begin here."

"You think the Russians faked the whole thing?"

"Who else?"

It was a good question, and Rand decided to pass over it for the moment. "How many people know that Beaver doesn't exist?"

"Only the two of us," Colonel Nelson said. "I've never told anyone which names were the dummies. The only true list is never removed from the vault downstairs."

"Have the Russians ever obtained a copy of either list?"

"They couldn't possibly have seen the true one, and to my knowledge the cover list has never fallen into unfriendly hands."

"And yet someone knew about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beaver." Rand rubbed his jaw in frank puzzlement. "You mentioned a message to be deciphered."

Colonel Nelson drew a deep breath. "One of the Russian party just arrived in London is Constantine Smolov, one of Taz's key men. He's handling the whole affair on this end, and he wants to meet with one of us. He specifically requested a cipher expert. Apparently there's another message we don't know about."

"I'll go," Rand said. He'd always been curious about the people employed by Taz, his opposite on the Russian side.

"Here's the hotel and room number. Just find out what they're up to. Don't offer any information, and whatever you do, walk gently! The Prime Minister—"

"I understand," Rand told him. He was anxious to be on his way. The room was stifling, and Colonel Nelson's electric fan was no larger than his.

The Russian delegation was not at the best hotel in London, but their choice could reasonably be called the second best. Built to American standards it was completely air-conditioned—a fact for which Rand was immediately grateful. The man he'd come to see, Constantine Smolov, proved to be a gray and bulky person who looked almost too Russian to be true. Inside his modernistic hotel room the radio was tuned to one of the offshore pirate stations, filling the air with the throbbing twang of electric guitars.

"You like that sort of music?" Rand asked the Russian.

"No, no. But I have read of your practice of bugging rooms." The man grinned to show a scattering of gold teeth. "The noise of the radio covers our conversation."

"Sure." Rand sat down and took out his cigarettes.

"I had hoped they would have room for me at the Embassy—"

"I came about Beaver," Rand interrupted, anxious to get down to business.

The Russian nodded. "My superior, Comrade Taz, has spoken of you often, Mr. Rand—you and Concealed Communications."

"Did he ever tell you the Russians are pretty good at bugging rooms themselves?" The music was giving him a headache.

"What?"

"Never mind. I came about Beaver."

Smolov leaned back in his chair. "Exactly. We have the messages, as do you. We have raided the room containing your hidden radio transmitter in Kerch. Soon we will have your agent, as well."

"Beaver is no agent of ours. The man doesn't exist."

The Russian was smiling. "Come now, Mr. Rand! The man was using your radio frequency, your cipher—"

Rand waved the words away

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with his hand. "Doesn't that very fact prove he's not our agent? We know you broke that cipher months ago."

Smolov's smile disappeared momentarily. "You believe we planned this entire thing? To sabotage the conference?"

"Would that be so strange?"

The Russian grunted as he leaned over to unsnap the attaché case at his feet. "Here, Mr. Rand. These are photographs of the room in Kerch from which your Beaver was broadcasting. Notice the transmitter with its British Army markings. Notice the books and magazines in English."

"All easily faked."

The Russian turned grim. "You can prove that by identifying Beaver and stating his motives. I have one other bit of evidence to show you." He dug into his case and came up with photostatic copies of an envelope and letter which he passed to Rand. The letter had been addressed to someone named Walter Williams at a Moscow hotel, and bore a London postmark six weeks old.

"So?"

"You'll notice that the envelope bears the return address of the Intercontinental Trade Delegation, which we both know to be a front for British Intelligence." Rand said nothing; the statement was true enough. "This prompted us to intercept the letter and copy its contents. We could make nothing of it at the time, and we still can't. But this Walter Williams appears to be your agent Beaver."

"Why do you say that?"

"After this arrived, we followed him from Moscow. He went to Kerch and rented the apartment. After the fourth message we raided it, but he escaped. Temporarily."

Rand glanced at the copy of the message Williams had received in Moscow. It contained only a single column of dates:

February 27, 1646
March 10, 1646
March 15, 1646
April 2, 1647
April 5, 1647
April 13, 1647
February 25, 1661
February 27, 1661
March 4, 1661
March 5, 1661
March 27, 1662
April 1, 1662
April 19, 1662

"May I keep this?" Rand asked. "And the pictures?"

"Certainly. We have other copies."

Rand knew something had to be done. But for the life of him he didn't know exactly what. "I'll be in touch with you."

The Russian smiled again. "You have until this time tomorrow to convince us that the British government was not involved."

"The only way I can do that is to prove that the Russian government

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was involved," Rand said as he left the hotel room.

It was late afternoon by the time Rand reached the little book-lined office on the floor below his, occupied by Professor Charles Further. Of the many departments in British Intelligence which he might visit in the course of the normal working day, none was as unfamiliar to Rand as Professor Further's domain.

The balding, middle-aged man was the building's resident historian, a specialist on British history and the development of Western civilization. He often sat in on major planning discussions, especially when they involved ethnic groups or the inter-actions of various nationalistic sensibilities.

"Mr. Rand," he said, rising from behind a cluttered desk. "To what do I owe the honor of this visit?"

Rand shook hands and sat down. "Some information about dates, Professor."

"Certainly, certainly! Always pleased to assist Double-C." He picked up the book that had been open on the desk before him. *"The Art of War,* by the Chinese general Sun Tzu. He lived in the Fourth Century, B.C., and he had some quite interesting views on the practice of espionage."

Rand glanced at the volume. "A bit before your period, isn't it?"

"An historian must know history, especially an historian in the Intelligence Department. *The life of spies is to know, not to be known.* George Herbert said that, I believe. And now, what is your problem?"

Rand showed him the list of dates. "If it's a code, we're in trouble without their code book, but it might be some sort of cipher. I want to know two things, Professor. First, did anything special happen on those dates in history?"

The balding man studied the list, adjusting his glasses. "Let me see . . . The first date, February 27, 1646, would have been during the reign of Charles I, about two years before his execution. But nothing special happened on that date, or on any of the others, so far as I know. Since the months are in English, I assume the dates refer to English history, but I draw a blank on them. The ones near the bottom of the list, in 1661 and 1662, would be covered by Samuel Pepys' diary, but I doubt if you'll find anything very startling there, either."

"Didn't Pepys write his diary in cipher?"

Professor Further nodded. "Of a sort. It was really more of a shorthand system. Nothing like this."

Rand sighed. "All right. If the dates have no meaning as dates, I'll have to try something else. I've already experimented with various number combinations and gotten nowhere. Now I'm wondering about the intervals between the dates. Were any of these years leap years?"

The professor thought for a mo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment. "No, none of them." He wrote down a few figures. "I don't see how the intervals could mean anything. You have three dates close together, then a jump of more than a year, and three more close together. Then you jump nearly fourteen years, have a grouping of four, and another jump of more than a year to the final grouping."

"All right," Rand decided finally. "I'll have to try something else. Maybe my boys upstairs can do something with it."

He left Professor Further glancing through his book and went back to Colonel Nelson's office. The electric fans were going everywhere, but somehow he'd stopped noticing the heat. There were other things on his mind.

He ran over the day's events with Nelson and confessed he was at a dead end. "I'll spend the night working over that list of dates, but I'm beginning to think the whole thing might be one of Taz's hoaxes. For all I know the message might say *Rand is a bloody fool.* Still, if we can believe the Russians—"

Colonel Nelson wasn't smiling. "If you believe the Russians, then you must disbelieve me. I say we had no agent in Kerch."

"I know," Rand said. He decided it was time for dinner. It was time for something, anyway.

The evening papers were full of hints. Nothing concrete, merely hints. The Russians had arrived in London for the disarmament conference, but they were most unhappy about something. The word *intrigue* appeared in one headline.

Walking through the London night, Rand thought that this was how it really worked most of the time. No gunshots in an alley, no daggers beneath the cloak—only men using their brains in hot little offices a thousand miles from each other, with Europe as the chessboard and the world as the prize. Perhaps they were only a squalid procession of vain fools, as that fellow le Carré had written, but there was a certain nobility in it, too. Sometimes.

After dinner Rand went back to his office. Colonel Nelson's window was dark, and Rand waved to a departing Professor Further as he walked across the lobby to the night elevator. The guard told him there was a girl waiting upstairs. "She wants to see somebody in charge, sir. About the conference thing. Says it's important."

"All right," Rand said. "I'll see her." He was grasping at straws now.

The girl sat in one of the reception rooms, nervously twisting a pair of gloves. Her name was Diana Benson, and she was carefully dressed to accentuate her best features. "Are you in charge?" she asked in a low voice.

He motioned her toward one of the interview rooms and put on the tape recorder—normal procedure

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for all interviews. "My name is Rand. I'm working on preparations for the conference."

She nodded her head and pushed back a fringe of brown hair. "I read in the newspapers that there's a suspicion of trouble. I thought I might be able to help."

"How?"

"I'm a secretary for a large import-export firm here in London. My employer—I don't exactly know how to put this—but I believe there is a group of very important businessmen who would like the conference to fail."

"That's always true of disarmament conferences. Just watch the stock exchange. Munitions, electronics, aircraft—too many industries in every country depend on defense orders."

"But you don't fully understand. I've typed some letters. There is a cartel of international businessmen who'll stop at nothing to sabotage the talks! I can give you names."

For the next quarter hour the girl listed the names of her employer and other businessmen and industrialists in America, Canada, France, and West Germany. Rand felt it was a long shot, but there just might be something to it. "I'll want to talk to you again," he finally told her. "After I've spoken to my superiors. In the meantime go home and act as if nothing's happened."

He had an assistant see her to the elevator as he pondered her story. The girl's information might be useful—it might even tie in somehow with the mysterious nonexistent Beaver. He wrote a long memo to Colonel Nelson about Diana Benson's visit and his impressions and asked Nelson to follow through.

Then he took out the photographs of Beaver's room in Kerch—the ones the Russian had given him. He spent a long time studying them through a magnifying glass, searching for any possible sign that "Beaver" could have been a woman.

It was still hot the following morning, and Rand hurried along Victoria Street with a feeling of dejection. He knew the Russian would be waiting in his air-conditioned hotel room, knew the Prime Minister would be waiting, too. Rand had sat up half the night with his two best men, working on the list of dates, reading the appropriate passages from Samuel Pepys' *Diary,* but they'd come up with nothing. The feeling grew in him that the whole thing—maybe even the girl's visit—was just a Russian trick.

And yet there were a few things that just didn't fit that theory. If it really was a Red plot to scuttle the conference, they more likely would have "discovered" the spy in Moscow itself, rather than the far-off industrial port of Kerch. And in a faked plot the so-called spy would have been captured in the very act of assassination, so there could be no doubt of his motives.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But if it wasn't a Russian plot, what was the alternative? Could he accept Colonel Nelson's assurances? Could he believe the girl's story?

Smolov stood up when he entered the hotel room, flipping shut a folder he'd been reading. "Good day, Mr. Rand," he said with a smile. "Has your department worked out the meaning of that message as yet?"

Rand cleared his throat. "I don't believe the message has any great importance in this affair."

The Russian considered this. "Perhaps you are right. Actually, I have just received another message from Moscow. Your agent Beaver was apprehended this morning."

Rand sat very still. "Really?"

"The foolish man returned to Moscow after escaping from the room in Kerch. He went back to his old hotel under the name of Walter Williams. He apparently did not realize we had been watching for him ever since he received that first mysterious message."

"What did he tell you?" Rand asked carefully. "That he was a British agent? That he was involved in an assassination plot?"

"I'm sure that information will come out."

"But *why?*" Rand tried to reason. "Why should we want to assassinate your leaders at this stage of things?"

"I leave that to others to determine. I only report facts." As if it were an afterthought he walked over to switch on the radio. "A copy of the Moscow message has already been forwarded to our mission leader in London. The disarmament talks will not take place."

"At least give me another hour or two! Let me communicate the news to my superior and the Prime Minister first."

Smolov glanced at his watch. "We will make no announcement before mid-afternoon."

"Thank you." Rand started for the door.

"Can I take back any message to Taz for you?"

"Not right now. Just tell him I hope we meet some day."

A half hour later he was in Colonel Nelson's office, repeating his conversation with Smolov and coming as close as he ever had to admitting failure. "Colonel, if only we had a bit more time. Time to check out this man they've arrested, more time to work on the message."

Colonel Nelson was equally glum. "I know, I know. But the clock's run out on us. The Russians are meeting with our Prime Minister and the American Secretary of State this afternoon at three. It'll all be in the open then."

"Do you know anything about this Walter Williams, the man who sent the Beaver messages?"

"He's not one of ours."

"Could he be American? C.I.A.?"

"I checked with them the first day. Nothing doing there." Colonel Nelson glanced at his desk. "By the way, that girl seems to have disappeared."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rand almost jumped.

"I phoned her home and her office. She never reached home after she left here, and she hasn't shown up today."

Rand was stunned. "Is it possible? Could she have been telling the truth?"

"I have no idea."

"She gave me a list of names. Her employer was involved—"

"An importer down by the docks. We're checking on him, but it'll take a little time."

Rand was staring into space. "If her story *was* true—"

"It still gets us nowhere." Colonel Nelson stood up. "I have to report our failure to the Prime Minister. There's no way of convincing the Russians that Beaver isn't our agent."

He left Rand alone in the office, and after a time Rand himself departed, walking slowly among the typists' desks. He shut the door of his own office and tumbled onto the worn leather sofa, not even bothering to switch on the electric fan.

Was it to end like this, with the clock run out on them? With the Russians smiling somewhere behind the scenes? With Taz in Moscow chuckling to himself?

He glanced at his desk and saw the thick volume of Pepys' *Diary*, left from the previous night's work. He walked over and picked it up, remembering the last two groups of dates on the list. He read through each entry again, learning nothing except that the last date, April 19, 1662 had been a Saturday.

And yet there was something bothering him. He glanced through the volume again, puzzled, then flipped to the first page of the text. Was it possible?

He looked at his watch. Not yet three o'clock. Was there still time? Still time for one last play in this chess game? Maybe, just maybe. But it would have to be something dramatic, startling, if it was to work.

He unlocked the bottom drawer of his desk and took out the little revolver he so rarely used.

He ran downstairs to the book-lined office where Professor Further was busily analyzing some problem in history. The professor glanced up as he entered. "Another question so soon, Mr. Rand?"

"It's something about Pepys," Rand began, closing the door behind him.

"Fire away."

Rand smiled and slipped the gun from his pocket. "I want the girl, and I want her alive, Professor. Or should I call you Beaver?"

Sometime later, when the heat of the day had all but passed, Colonel Nelson came to Rand's office. "It's over," he said with a sigh. "The girl is safe and we've filed formal charges against her employer and Professor Further. If we can get them on the kidnaping charge we may forget the rest of it, just to keep it out of the public press. The Russians

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are satisfied, and the conference will open on schedule."

"That's good."

"But tell me, Rand, how did you know about Further? He's been one of our most trusted advisors."

Rand leaned back in his chair. "Trusted, because you checked him out for Communist affiliations and stopped there. We live in a complicated world, Colonel. The men Further was in league with represent many countries, and they have purely economic reasons for wanting the Cold War to continue. If the whole thing had been a Russian plot, it would have been handled differently—with an attempted assassination in Moscow and all the trimmings. Perhaps even a real assassination—of someone they no longer needed."

"So it wasn't the Russians, and it wasn't us."

"I believed you, Colonel. Besides, you hardly would have used the old cipher if it was a real assassination plot. No, the Beaver crowd had to represent a third force, an outside force."

"But Further, of all people!"

"Look at it this way. This third force was using a code name from your secret list. The man had been supplied with regulation British equipment, with a British cipher, with the secret radio frequency. In addition to all that, the man Williams received final instructions in a letter from a British Intelligence cover group. Then add to this the fact that the girl disappeared immediately after talking with me. They might have followed her, but more likely she was seen by someone in this building. And I saw Further leaving just after she'd arrived.

"It all adds up to only one thing—someone in this building, in one of our own intelligence agencies, engineered the Beaver messages to wreck the conference."

"The list of dates—you deciphered it and it named Further!"

February 27, 1646
March 10, 1646
March 15, 1646
April 2, 1647
April 5, 1647
April 13, 1647
February 25, 1661
February 27, 1661
March 4, 1661
March 5, 1661
March 27, 1662
April 1, 1662
April 19, 1662

Rand shook his head. "I deciphered it, but the contents of the message told us nothing we didn't already know. It wasn't the message, it was Professor Further's lie that gave him away. I asked him about the intervals between the dates and he very carefully told me they were in four groups, with more than a year's gap between the first and second groups and the third and fourth groups."

"Isn't that right?"

"No, it isn't. Any history profes-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sor would certainly know that before 1752 England used the old-style calendar. New Year's Day was celebrated on January 1st, but the year did not legally begin until March 25th. Read Pepys' *Diary* or any detailed history of the period and you'll see what I mean. March 24, 1646 would have been *only one day* before March 25, 1647. What it did was give us *two* groupings of dates instead of *four*. From there on, the cipher was a simple one to crack—each number of days between dates corresponded directly to a letter of the alphabet."

"But what did the message say?"

"Be patient," Rand said with a smile. "Look—the proper number of days between dates on the list is 11-5-18-3-8, then a big gap to signify a space between words, and 2-5-1-22-5-18. Substituting the letters of the alphabet, we get K-E-R-C-H and B-E-A-V-E-R. Obviously, Williams was in Moscow when Professor Further was finally able to get a look at your secret list. He sent the city and the agent's code name on to Williams by cipher. I suppose he felt it was safer than trying to make contact with Williams by radio when the man was in a Moscow hotel. Unfortunately for him, he used an envelope that attracted Russian suspicion sooner than Further wanted."

"How did Further get to see my list?"

"As you said once yourself, a careless official or an untrustworthy secretary." Rand lit a cigarette. He was feeling good. "But it wasn't the message so much as Further's lie about the dates that tipped me off. He had to lie because he was afraid that if I cracked the cipher I could somehow convince the Russians we weren't involved."

"So someone in this building was involved, and Further lied to mislead you. I suppose that was enough for you to go on."

"It was enough for me to risk that scene with the gun. It shocked him into confessing everything. Actually, I doubt if they would have harmed the girl. They just wanted her out of the way before she could talk any more."

"Quite a coincidence that you went to Further for help in solving a cipher he himself created."

"Not at all," Rand said. "It's the sort of cipher an historian would concoct, and I went to an historian for help on it. Perfectly logical."

"Williams must have known what would happen to him. I wonder what the Russians will do to him."

Rand shrugged. "He knew what he was getting into."

Colonel Nelson walked to the window and stared down at the muddy waters of the Thames. "And so the conference goes on. Do you think it means the beginning of peace? Finally?"

"Who knows?" Rand replied, going back to the papers on his desk. "But peace or war, there'll always be a job for us."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a **HERCULE POIROT** *story by*
AGATHA CHRISTIE

Do you believe in superstition? No? Yet it was a fact that shortly after the opening of King Men-her-Ra's Tomb, in the vicinity of the Pyramids of Gizeh, three men connected with that discovery died suddenly and unexpectedly. Was it an "Egyptian curse"?—the vengeance of a long-dead king of the Eighth Dynasty visited on the desecrators of his tomb?

And to give you pause, that brilliant investigator, Hercule Poirot, said that he believed the force of superstition to be one of the greatest forces the world has ever known. And Poirot meant every word he said—as he always does . . .

THE ADVENTURE OF THE EGYPTIAN TOMB

by AGATHA CHRISTIE

I HAVE ALWAYS CONSIDERED THAT one of the most thrilling and dramatic of the many adventures I have shared with Hercule Poirot was that of our investigation into the strange series of deaths which followed the discovery and opening of the Tomb of King Men-her-Ra.

Hard on the discovery of the Tomb of Tutankh-Amen by Lord Carnarvon, Sir John Willard and Mr. Bleibner of New York, pursuing their excavations not far from Cairo, in the vicinity of the Pyramids of Gizeh, came unexpectedly on a series of funeral chambers. The greatest interest was aroused by their discovery. The Tomb appeared to be that of King Men-her-Ra, one of those shadowy kings of the Eighth Dynasty, when the Old Kingdom was falling to decay. Little was known about this period, and the discoveries were fully reported in the newspapers.

An event soon occurred which took a profound hold on the public mind. Sir John Willard died quite suddenly of heart failure.

The more sensational newspapers immediately took the opportunity of reviving all the old superstitious stories connected with the ill luck of certain Egyptian treasures. The unlucky Mummy at the British Museum, that hoary old chestnut, was

Copyright 1924 by Agatha Christie; renewed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dragged out with fresh zest, was quietly denied by the Museum, but nevertheless enjoyed all its usual vogue.

A fortnight later Mr. Bleibner died of acute blood poisoning, and a few days afterward a nephew of his shot himself in New York. The "Curse of Men-her-Ra" was the talk of the day, and the magic power of dead and gone Egypt was exalted to a fetish point.

It was then that Hercule Poirot received a brief note from Lady Willard, widow of the dead archeologist, asking him to see her at her house in Kensington Square. I accompanied him.

Lady Willard was a tall thin woman, dressed in deep mourning. Her haggard face bore eloquent testimony to her recent grief.

"It is kind of you to have come so promptly, Monsieur Poirot."

"I am at your service, Lady Willard. You wished to consult me?"

"You are, I am aware, a detective, but it is not only as a detective that I wish to consult you. You are a man of original views, I know; you have imagination, experience of the world—tell me, Monsieur Poirot, what are your views on the supernatural?"

Poirot hesitated for a moment before he replied. He seemed to be considering. Finally he said, "Let us not misunderstand each other, Lady Willard. It is not a general question that you are asking me. It has a personal application, has it not? You are referring obliquely to the death of your late husband?"

"That is so," she admitted.

"You want me to investigate the circumstances of his death?"

"I want you to ascertain for me exactly how much is newspaper chatter, and how much may be said to be founded on fact. Three deaths, Monsieur Poirot—each one explicable taken by itself, but taken together surely an almost unbelievable coincidence, and all within a month of the opening of the tomb! It may be mere superstition, it may be some potent curse from the past that operates in ways undreamed of by modern science. The fact remains—three deaths! And I am afraid, Monsieur Poirot, horribly afraid. It may not yet be the end."

"For whom do you fear?"

"For my son. When the news of my husband's death came I was ill. My son, who has just come down from Oxford, went out there. He brought the—the body home, but now he has gone out again, in spite of my prayers and entreaties. He is so fascinated by the work that he intends to take his father's place and carry on the excavations. You may think me a foolish, credulous woman, but, Monsieur Poirot, I am afraid. Supposing that the spirit of the dead King is not yet appeased? Perhaps to you I seem to be talking nonsense—"

"No, indeed, Lady Willard," said Poirot quickly. "I, too, believe in the force of superstition, one of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

greatest forces the world has ever known."

I looked at him in surprise. I should never have credited Poirot with being superstitious. But the little man was obviously in earnest.

"What you really demand is that I shall protect your son? I will do my utmost to keep him from harm."

"Yes, in the ordinary way, but against an occult influence?"

"In volumes of the Middle Ages, Lady Willard, you will find many ways of counteracting black magic. Perhaps they knew more than we moderns with all our boasted science. Now let us come to facts, that I may have guidance. Your husband had always been a devoted Egyptologist, hadn't he?"

"Yes, from his youth upwards. He was one of the greatest living authorities on the subject."

"But Mr. Bleibner, I understand, was more or less of an amateur?"

"Oh, quite. He was a very wealthy man who dabbled freely in any subject that happened to take his fancy. My husband managed to interest him in Egyptology, and it was his money that was so useful in financing the expedition."

"And the nephew? What do you know of his tastes? Was he with the party at all?"

"I do not think so. In fact, I never knew of his existence till I read of his death in the paper. I do not think he and Mr. Bleibner can have been at all intimate. He never spoke of having any relations."

"Who are the other members of the party?"

"Well, there is Dr. Tosswill, a minor official connected with the British Museum; Mr. Schneider of the Metropolitan Museum in New York; a young American secretary; Dr. Ames, who accompanies the expedition in his professional capacity; and Hassan, my husband's devoted native servant."

"Do you remember the name of the American secretary?"

"Harper, I think, but I cannot be sure. He had not been with Mr. Bleibner very long, I know. He was a very pleasant young fellow."

"Thank you, Lady Willard."

"If there is anything else?"

"For the moment, nothing. Leave it now in my hands, and be assured that I will do all that is humanly possible to protect your son."

They were not exactly reassuring words, and I observed Lady Willard wince as he uttered them. Yet, at the same time, the fact that he had not pooh-poohed her fears seemed in itself to be a relief to her.

For my part I had never before suspected that Poirot had so deep a vein of superstition in his nature. I tackled him on the subject as we went homeward. His manner was grave and earnest.

"But yes, Hastings. I believe in these things. You must not underrate the force of superstition."

"What are we going to do about it?"

"*Toujours pratique,* the good

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hastings! *Eh bien,* to begin with we are going to cable to New York for fuller details of young Mr. Bleibner's death."

He duly sent off his cable. The reply was full and precise. Young Rupert Bleibner had been in low water for several years. He had been a beachcomber and a remittance man in several South Sea islands, but had returned to New York two years ago, where he had rapidly sunk lower and lower. The most significant thing, to my mind, was that he had recently managed to borrow enough money to take him to Egypt.

"I've a good friend there I can borrow from," he had declared. Here, however, his plans had gone awry. He had returned to New York cursing his skinflint of an uncle who cared more for the bones of dead and gone kings than his own flesh and blood. It was during his sojourn in Egypt that the death of Sir John Willard occurred.

Rupert had plunged once more into his life of dissipation in New York, and then, without warning, he had committed suicide, leaving behind him a letter which contained some curious phrases. It seemed written in a sudden fit of remorse. He referred to himself as a leper and an outcast, and the letter ended by declaring that such as he were better dead.

A shadowy theory leaped into my brain. I had never really believed in the vengeance of a long-dead Egyptian king. I saw here a more modern crime. Supposing this young man had decided to do away with his uncle—preferably by poison. By mistake, Sir John Willard receives the fatal dose. The young man returns to New York, haunted by his crime. The news of his uncle's death reaches him. He realizes how unnecessary his crime has been and stricken with remorse he takes his own life.

I outlined my solution to Poirot. He was interested.

"It is ingenious what you have thought of—decidedly it is ingenious. It may even be true. But you leave out of count the fatal influence of the Tomb."

"You still think that has something to do with it?"

"So much so, *mon ami,* that we start for Egypt tomorrow."

"What?" I cried, astonished.

"I have said it." An expression of conscious heroism spread over Poirot's face. Then he groaned. "But, oh," he lamented, "the sea! The hateful sea!"

It was a week later. Beneath our feet was the golden sand of the desert. The hot sun poured down overhead. Poirot, the picture of misery, wilted by my side. The little man was not a good traveler. Our four days' voyage from Marseilles had been one long agony to him.

He had landed at Alexandria the wraith of his former self—even his usual neatness had deserted him. We had arrived in Cairo and had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

driven out at once to the Mena House Hotel, right in the shadow of the Pyramids.

The charm of Egypt had laid hold of me. Not so Poirot. Dressed precisely the same as in London, he carried a small clothes brush in his pocket and waged an unceasing war on the dust which accumulated on his dark apparel.

"And my boots," he wailed. "Regard them, Hastings. My boots, of the neat patent leather, usually so smart and shining. See, the sand is inside them, which is painful, and outside them, which outrages the eyesight. Also the heat, it causes my mustaches to become limp—but limp!"

"Look at the Sphinx," I urged. "Even I can feel the mystery and the charm it exhales."

Poirot looked at it discontentedly.

"It has not the air happy," he declared. "How could it, half buried in sand in that untidy fashion. Ah, this cursed sand!"

"Come, now, there's a lot of sand in Belgium," I reminded him, mindful of a holiday spent at Knocke-sur-mer in the midst of *"les dunes impeccables,"* as the guide book had phrased it.

"Not in Brussels," declared Poirot. He gazed at the Pyramids thoughtfully. "It is true that they, at least, are of a shape solid and geometrical, but their surface is of an unevenness most unpleasing. And the palm trees I like them not. Not even do they plant them in rows!"

I cut short his lamentations by suggesting that we should start for the camp. We were to ride there on camels, and the beasts were patiently kneeling, waiting for us to mount, in charge of several picturesque boys headed by a voluble dragoman.

I pass over the spectacle of Poirot on a camel. He started by groans and ended by shrieks, gesticulations and invocations to the Virgin Mary and every Saint in the calendar. In the end he descended ignominiously and finished the journey on a diminutive donkey. I must admit that a trotting camel is no joke for the amateur. I was stiff for several days.

At last we neared the scene of the excavations. A sunburnt man with a gray beard, in white clothes and wearing a helmet, came to meet us.

"Monsieur Poirot and Captain Hastings? We received your cable. I'm sorry that there was no one to meet you in Cairo. An unforeseen event occurred which completely disorganized our plans."

Poirot paled. His hand, which had stolen to his clothes brush, stayed its course.

"Not another death?" he breathed.

"Yes."

"Sir Guy Willard?" I cried.

"No, Captain Hastings. My American colleague, Mr. Schneider."

"And the cause?" demanded Poirot.

"Tetanus."

I blanched. All around me I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seemed to feel an atmosphere of evil, subtle and menacing. A horrible thought flashed across me. Supposing I were the next?

"Mon Dieu," said Poirot in a very low voice, "I do not understand this. It is horrible. Tell me, monsieur, there is no doubt that it was tetanus?"

"I believe not. But Dr. Ames will tell you more than I can do."

"Ah, of course, you are not the doctor."

"My name is Tosswill."

This, then, was the British expert described by Lady Willard as being a minor official at the British Museum. There was something at once grave and steadfast about him that took my fancy.

"If you will come with me," continued Dr. Tosswill, "I will take you to Sir Guy Willard. He was most anxious to be informed as soon as you should arrive."

We were taken across the camp to a large tent. Dr. Tosswill lifted up the flap and we entered. Three men were sitting inside.

"Monsieur Poirot and Captain Hastings have arrived, Sir Guy," said Tosswill.

The youngest of the three men jumped up and came forward to greet us. There was a certain impulsiveness in his manner which reminded me of his mother. He was not nearly so sunburnt as the others, and that fact, coupled with a certain haggardness round the eyes, made him look older than his 22 years. He was clearly endeavoring to bear up under a severe mental strain.

He introduced his two companions, Dr. Ames, a capable-looking man of thirty-odd, with a touch of graying hair at the temples, and Mr. Harper, the secretary, a pleasant lean young man wearing horn-rimmed spectacles.

After a few minutes' desultory conversation the latter went out, and Dr. Tosswill followed him. We were left alone with Sir Guy and Dr. Ames.

"Please ask any questions you wish, Monsieur Poirot," said Willard. "We are utterly dumfounded at this strange series of disasters, but it isn't—it can't be, anything but coincidence."

There was a nervousness about his manner which rather belied the words. I saw that Poirot was studying him keenly.

"Your heart is really in this work, Sir Guy?"

"Rather. No matter what happens, or what comes of it, the work is going on. Make up your mind to that."

Poirot wheeled round on the other.

"What have you to say to that, *monsieur le docteur?*"

"Well," drawled the doctor, "I'm not for quitting myself."

Poirot made one of those expressive grimaces of his.

"Then, *évidemment,* we must find out just how we stand. When did Mr. Schneider die?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Three days ago."

"You are sure it was tetanus?"

"Dead sure."

"It couldn't have been a case of strychnine poisoning, for instance?"

"No, Monsieur Poirot. I see what you're getting at. But it was a clear case of tetanus."

"Did you not inject anti-serum?"

"Certainly we did," said the doctor dryly. "Every conceivable thing that could be done was tried."

"Had you the anti-serum with you?"

"No. We procured it from Cairo."

"Have there been any other cases of tetanus in the camp?"

"No, not one."

"Are you certain that the death of the older Mr. Bleibner was not due to tetanus?"

"Absolutely certain. He had a scratch on his thumb which became poisoned, and septicemia set in. It sounds the same to a layman, but the two are entirely different."

"Then we have four deaths, all totally dissimilar—one heart failure, one blood poisoning, one suicide, and one tetanus."

"Exactly, Monsieur Poirot."

"Are you certain that there is nothing which might link the four together?"

"I don't quite understand you."

"I will put it plainly. Was any act committed by those four men which might seem to denote disrespect to the spirit of Men-her-Ra?"

The doctor gazed at Poirot in astonishment.

"You're talking through your hat, Monsieur Poirot. Surely you don't believe all that fool talk?"

"Absolute nonsense," muttered Willard angrily.

Poirot remained placidly immovable, blinking a little out of his green cat's eyes.

"So you do not believe it, *monsieur le docteur?*"

"No, sir, I do not," declared the doctor emphatically. "I am a scientific man, and I believe only what science teaches."

"Was there no science then in Ancient Egypt?" asked Poirot softly. He did not wait for a reply, and indeed Dr. Ames seemed rather at a loss for the moment. "No, no, do not answer me, but tell me this. What do the native workmen think?"

"I guess," said Dr. Ames, "that where white folk lose their heads, natives aren't going to be far behind. I'll admit that they're getting what you might call scared—but they've no cause to be."

"I wonder," said Poirot noncommittally.

Sir Guy leaned forward.

"Surely," he cried incredulously, "you cannot believe in—oh, but the thing's absurd! You can know nothing of Ancient Egypt if you think that."

For answer Poirot produced a little book from his pocket—an ancient tattered volume. As he held it out I saw its title, *The Magic of the Egyptians and Chaldeans.* Then,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wheeling round, he strode out of the tent. The doctor stared at me.

"What is his little idea?"

The phrase, so familiar on Poirot's lips, made me smile when it came from another.

"I don't know exactly," I confessed. "He's got some plan of exorcizing the evil spirits, I believe."

I went in search of Poirot and found him talking to the lean-faced young man who had been the late Mr. Bleibner's secretary.

"No," Mr. Harper was saying, "I've only been six months with the expedition. Yes, I knew Mr. Bleibner's affairs pretty well."

"Can you recount to me anything concerning his nephew?"

"He turned up here one day, not a bad-looking fellow. I'd never met him before, but some of the others had—Ames, I think, and Schneider. The old man wasn't at all pleased to see him. They were at it in no time, hammer and tongs. 'Not a cent,' the old man shouted. 'Not one cent now or when I'm dead. I intend to leave my money to the furtherance of my life's work. I've been talking it over with Mr. Schneider today.' And more of the same. Young Bleibner lit out for Cairo right away."

"Was he in perfectly good health at the time?"

"The old man?"

"No, the young one."

"I believe he did mention there was something wrong with him. But it couldn't have been anything serious, or I should have remembered."

"One thing more. Has Mr. Bleibner left a will?"

"So far as we know, he has not."

"Are you remaining with the expedition, Mr. Harper?"

"No, sir, I am not. I'm for New York as soon as I can square up things here. You may laugh if you like, but I'm not going to be this blasted old Men-her-Ra's next victim. He'll get me if I stop here."

The young man wiped the perspiration from his brow.

Poirot turned away. Over his shoulder he said with a peculiar smile, "Remember, he got one of his victims in New York."

"Oh, hell!" said Mr. Harper forcibly.

"That young man is nervous," said Poirot thoughtfully. "He is on the edge, but absolutely on the edge."

I glanced at Poirot curiously, but his enigmatical smile told me nothing. In company with Sir Guy Willard and Dr. Tosswill we were taken round the excavations. The principal finds had been removed to Cairo, but some of the tomb furniture was extremely interesting.

The enthusiasm of the young baronet was obvious, but I fancied that I detected a shade of nervousness in his manner, as though he could not quite escape from the feeling of menace in the air.

As we entered the tent which had been assigned to us, for a wash be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fore joining the evening meal, a tall dark figure in white robes stood aside to let us pass with a graceful gesture and a murmured greeting in Arabic. Poirot stopped.

"You are Hassan, the late Sir John Willard's servant?"

"I served my Lord Sir John, now I serve his son." He took a step nearer to us and lowered his voice. "You are a wise one, they say, learned in dealing with evil spirits. Let the young master depart from here. There is evil in the air around us."

And with an abrupt gesture, not waiting for a reply, he strode away.

"Evil in the air," muttered Poirot. "Yes, I feel it."

Our meal was hardly a cheerful one. The floor was left to Dr. Tosswill, who discoursed at length on Egyptian antiquities. Just as we were preparing to retire, Sir Guy caught Poirot by the arm and pointed. A shadowy figure was moving among the tents.

It was no human figure: I recognized distinctly the dog-headed figure I had seen carved on the walls of the tomb.

My blood literally froze at the sight.

"Mon Dieu!" murmured Poirot, crossing himself vigorously. "Anubis, the jackal-headed, the god of departing souls."

"Someone is hoaxing us," cried Dr. Tosswill, rising indignantly to his feet.

"It went into your tent, Harper," muttered Sir Guy, his face pale.

"No," said Poirot, shaking his head, "into that of the Dr. Ames."

The doctor stared at him incredulously; then, repeating Dr. Tosswill's words, he cried, "Someone is hoaxing us. Come, we'll soon catch the fellow."

He dashed out in pursuit of the apparition. I followed him, but, search as we would, we could find no trace of any living thing having passed that way. We returned, somewhat disturbed in mind, to find Poirot taking energetic measures, in his own way, to insure his personal safety. He was busily surrounding our tent with various diagrams and inscriptions which he was drawing in the sand.

I recognized the five-pointed star or Pentagon many times repeated. As was his custom, Poirot was at the same time delivering an impromptu lecture on witchcraft and magic in general—White Magic as opposed to Black—with various references to the Ka and the Book of the Dead thrown in.

It appeared to excite the liveliest contempt in Dr. Tosswill, who drew me aside, literally snorting with rage.

"Balderdash, sir," he exclaimed angrily. "Pure balderdash. The man's an impostor. He doesn't know the difference between the superstitions of the Middle Ages and the beliefs of Ancient Egypt. Never have I heard such a hodgepodge of ignorance and credulity."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I calmed the excited expert, and joined Poirot in the tent. My little friend was beaming cheerfully.

"We can now sleep in peace," he declared happily. "And I can do with some sleep. My head, it aches abominably. Ah, for a good *tisane!*"

As though in answer to prayer, the flap of the tent was lifted and Hassan appeared, bearing a steaming cup which he offered to Poirot. It proved to be camomile tea, a beverage of which he is inordinately fond. Having thanked Hassan and refused his offer of another cup for myself, we were left alone once more. I stood at the door of the tent, looking out over the desert.

"A wonderful place," I said aloud, "and a wonderful work. I can feel the fascination. This desert life, this probing into the heart of a vanished civilization. Surely, Poirot, you, too, must feel the charm?"

I got no answer, and I turned, a little annoyed. My annoyance was quickly changed to concern. Poirot was lying back across the rude couch, his face horribly convulsed. Beside him was the empty cup.

I rushed to his side, then dashed out and across the camp to Dr. Ames's tent.

"Dr. Ames!" I cried. "Come at once!"

"What's the matter?" said the doctor, appearing in pajamas.

"My friend. He's ill. Dying. The camomile tea. Don't let Hassan leave the camp."

Like a flash the doctor ran to our tent. Poirot was lying as I left him.

"Extraordinary," cried Ames. "Looks like a seizure—or—what did you say about something he drank?" He picked up the empty cup.

"Only I did not drink it!" said a placid voice.

We turned in amazement. Poirot was sitting up on the bed. He was smiling.

"No," he said gently. "I did not drink it. While my good friend Hastings was apostrophizing the night, I took the opportunity of pouring it, not down my throat, but into a little bottle. That little bottle will go to the analytical chemist. No"—as the doctor made a sudden movement—"as a sensible man you will understand that violence will be of no avail. During Hastings' brief absence to fetch you, I have had time to put the bottle in safe keeping. Ah, quick, Hastings, hold him!"

I misunderstand Poirot's anxiety. Eager to save my friend, I flung myself in front of him. But the doctor's swift movement had another meaning. His hand went to his mouth, a smell of bitter almonds filled the air, and he swayed forward and fell.

"Another victim," said Poirot gravely, "but the last. Perhaps it is the best way. He has three deaths on his head."

"Dr. Ames?" I cried, stupefied. "But I thought you believed in some occult influence?"

"You misunderstood me, Has-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tings. What I meant was that I believe in the terrific force of superstition. Once get it firmly established that a series of deaths are supernatural, and you might almost stab a man in broad daylight, and it would still be put down to the curse, so strongly is the instinct of the supernatural implanted in the human race.

"I suspected from the first that a man was taking advantage of that instinct. The idea came to him, I imagine, with the natural death of Sir John Willard. A fury of superstition arose at once. As far as I could see, nobody could derive any particular profit from Sir John's death.

"Mr. Bleibner, however, was a different case. He was a man of great wealth. The information I received from New York contained several suggestive points. To begin with, young Bleibner was reported to have said he had a good friend in Egypt from whom he could borrow. It was tacitly understood that he meant his uncle, but it seemed to me that in that case he would have said so outright. The words suggested some boon companion of his own.

"Another thing, he scraped up enough money to take him to Egypt, his uncle refused outright to advance him a penny, yet he was able to pay the return passage to New York. Someone must have lent him the money."

"All that was very thin," I objected.

"But there was more. Hastings, there occur often enough words spoken metaphorically which are taken literally. The opposite can happen too. In this case, words which were meant literally were taken metaphorically. Young Bleibner wrote plainly enough: 'I am a leper'; but nobody realized that he shot himself because he believed that he had contracted the dread disease of leprosy."

"What?" I exclaimed.

"It was the clever invention of a diabolical mind. Young Bleibner was suffering from some minor skin trouble, he had lived in the South Sea Islands, where the disease is common enough. Ames was a former friend of his, and a well-known medical man—young Bleibner would never have dreamed of doubting his word.

"When I arrived here, my suspicions were divided between Harper and Dr. Ames, but I soon realized that only the doctor could have perpetrated and concealed the crimes, and I learned from Harper that he was previously acquainted with young Bleibner. Doubtless the latter at some time or another had made a will or had insured his life in favor of the doctor. The latter saw his chance of acquiring wealth.

"It was easy for him to inoculate the older Mr. Bleibner with deadly germs. Then the nephew, overcome with despair at the dread news his friend had conveyed to him, shot himself. Mr. Bleibner, whatever his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intentions, had made no will. His fortune would therefore pass to his nephew and from him to the doctor."

"And Mr. Schneider?"

"We cannot be sure. He knew young Bleibner too, remember, and may have suspected something, or, again, the doctor may have thought that another motiveless and purposeless death would strengthen the coils of superstition.

"Furthermore, I will tell you an interesting psychological fact, Hastings. A murderer has always a strong desire to repeat his successful crime, the performance of it grows on him. Hence my fears for young Willard. The figure of Anubis you saw tonight was Hassan, dressed up by my orders. I wanted to see if I could frighten the doctor.

"But it would take more than the supernatural to frighten that man. I could see that he was not entirely taken in by my pretenses of belief in the occult. The little comedy I played for him did not deceive him for a moment.

"I suspected that he would endeavor to make me the next victim. Ah, but in spite of *la mer maudite,* the heat abominable, and the annoyances of the sand, the little gray cells still functioned!"

Poirot proved to be completely right in his premises. Young Bleibner, some years ago, in a fit of drunken merriment, had made a jocular will, leaving "my cigarette case you admire so much and everything else of which I die possessed which will be principally debts to my good friend Robert Ames who once saved my life from drowning."

The case was hushed up as far as possible, and, to this day people talk of the remarkable series of deaths in connection with the Tomb of Menher-Ra as a triumphal proof of the vengeance of a bygone king on the desecrators of his tomb—a belief which, as Poirot pointed out to me, is contrary to all Egyptian belief.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 314th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . a strong "first story"—with the impact of a bullet smacking dead-center . . .

The author, John Holt, is a "forty-year-old Illinoisan transplanted to New Jersey by way of New York City." He says he is "constantly surrounded by beautiful women—a wife, two small daughters, and a Siberian Husky." Among other pursuits, he has worked for a literary agency, for the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, and has written for educational (noncommercial) radio. He was (still quoting from his letter) "early addicted to thrillers of all kinds and vividly remembers buying Volume 1, Number 1 of EQMM more than 25 years ago." After not trying his hand at a short story for a long time, he "recently noticed blood dripping" from his typewriter. Gripped by a strange urge, he inserted a sheet of paper, started to type feverishly, and—voilà—his story "Number One" became Number One . . .

NUMBER ONE

by JOHN HOLT

YOU DON'T THINK I WANTED TO DO what I did, do you?

It's not like I was some kind of monster you read about in the newspapers, one of these creeps who goes around strangling housewives or taking potshots at perfect strangers. Why, I couldn't do such a thing in a million years! Actually, the whole business was just bad luck—or like some kind of huge joke that got played on all of us.

Listen, when I served seven out of ten on that last stretch and got my parole I swore never again. Not one year, not one month, not one more day behind bars—they'd have to kill me first. I'd spent a total of fifteen years vacuum-packed, and that doesn't count various local clinks where I'd done research, you might say, and learned my trade.

No, sir, I told myself, from now on you're Mr. Square himself, a real Honest John, ready to settle down and make like a solid citizen.

Practically the first thing I did when I walked through that gate for the last time was board the IC and head for Little Egypt, where I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had a job waiting for me. I was very grateful for that job, because I wouldn't have got out of Joliet without it. I wasn't like a lot of ex-cons—bitter. I was grateful for everything.

You see, I'd sowed my wild oats, and I'd done some heavy work, but I wasn't really one of these anti-social characters you read about in the papers, and I didn't figure that society owed me anything. If one of my three stretches had been a bum rap, well, there were other raps that had never been pinned on me.

So why shouldn't I be grateful?

I was lucky, or so I thought at the time. There were these two Decatur boys I'd known in high school, and in those days we'd been tighter than this fist. I'd hardly seen them since, but they hadn't forgotten me, which is the kind of friends to have. They'd moved south, and Ned had opened one of the biggest automobile agencies in that part of the state, with Luke as head of maintenance. I'd jockeyed iron and I really knew cars, having spent a good part of the last seven years working on state vehicles. So a place in their organization was cut out for me.

I tell you, it was wonderful, and I'll always be grateful to those guys.

Now, does that sound like I'm such a monster?

The minute I got off the train I spotted the boys. There was Ned, plump as ever but bald up front, and Luke, still skinny but bald in back, and me, always the muscles but thin on top. We laughed and thumped backs and joked about how we still had a full head of hair between us, and it was like we'd never really been apart.

The boys showed me the room they'd rented for me, a really swell place, big, warm, and comfortable. Then they took me around to the agency, and I met the boys: Little Tim, Sweeney, George, the whole crew.

And I got off on the right foot right away.

"Look, boys," I said, "I'm an ex-con, and there's no sense pretending I'm not. I mean, I'm through with that life, but facts are facts, and if any of you fellows ever want to know what it was like, I'll be more than happy to tell you. I'll tell you this right now, though: I did that last seven years standing on my hands. But did any of you guys ever try standing on your hands for seven years?"

That got a big laugh, and I knew I was in.

I tell you, life was great. The town was really nice, see, and everybody was nice to me, and practically advertising that I was an ex-con was the smartest thing I ever did. Sort of shook people up at first, but when they saw how wide-open I was, they got interested like it was my professional background, you know what I mean?

I got to know a guy on the local rag, and pretty soon we were doing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a couple of articles on prison life. Informative and inspirational stuff, you might say. Next thing I knew, I was talking to the Boy Scouts, and I talked to them good.

"Listen, fellows," I said, "the people who are behind bars are there because they *should* be there!"

Some folks were worried at first about me talking to their kids, but after that they said the Chief of Police and me should work out a program for the high school assembly.

Does that make me a monster?

Yeah, I settled down and became more of a solid citizen every day, and we had some terrific times. Ned was a widower, and I don't know how many hours we spent in his basement, drinking beer and talking guns and hunting and women and generally chewing the fat. He was a gun nut, and he'd soundproofed his basement so that he had a real shooting range down there, and he had a metal lathe, a drill press, bullet molds, the works. There were always some rifles and shotguns and half a dozen pistols lying on his workbench, but his real big deal was the bulletproof vest he'd been working on for years. He was going to patent it and get rich, he said, and buy us our own private bowling alley.

Luke, now, he was the real bowler in our crowd. He ran the agency team, and he got me on right away. I'd never bowled before in my life, but he taught me, and in three weeks he had me breaking 150—at least once in a while. He had me work out with a dumbbell twice as heavy as a standard bowling ball, see, and pretty soon that ball seemed like nothing.

Life was real sweet those days. The laughs we had—those guys at the agency were all real jokers. Like the time George kept telling Sweeney he should put fertilizer on his lawn. Sweeney got tired of it, and he had a whole load of fertilizer dumped right up against George's front door. So George had a whole ton of coal dumped through a tiny window to Sweeney's crawl space under his house, and Sweeney had to carry it practically lump by lump the length of the crawl space to the coal bin.

Or there was the time Little Tim was too shy to ask this girl in the office for a date. We put up with his mooning for about a month, then one evening we tied Little Tim up, crated him, and hired a trucking outfit to deliver him right to her doorstep. Now, I'll admit that sounds a little raw—some of our jokes *were* a little raw—but, you know, those two got married!

Oh, I could go on and on about the good times we had. And, really, I owed it all to Ned and Luke, my two best friends. They were the ones who introduced me to Lila. She was divorced, her husband had run off, and she owned this fancy bar. Well, I was supposed to steer clear of bars because of my parole, you know, but my officer was a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

very understanding guy, and besides before long I was going to church with Lila.

Me! To church!

Does that sound like I'm a monster?

Lots of times we'd all go out together, me with Lila, Ned and Luke with Marie. Marie was this redheaded widow, and she and Ned and Luke would argue all the time about which one she was going to marry. Ned said she should marry him because he was a widower, and because of that they'd understand each other better. And Luke would say she should marry *him* because he'd never *been* married, and it wasn't fair for Ned to have two wives and him none. Both of them really were after her, you see, but still it was fun. Because we were all friends. The *best* of friends.

That's what makes it all so terrible.

I'd been in town about six months when I got that telephone call. That evening I'd had supper with one of the boys and gone back to my place to sack out for a while before meeting Lila. Then the phone rang, and it was Luke, sounding all excited.

"You know that bulletproof vest Ned's been working on?" he said.

"Of course I know," I said. "I've been hearing about it ever since I came to town."

"Well, he's perfected it. I'm calling from his place. We just put it on a dummy," he said, "and the thing really works!"

"You kidding me?"

"No—I just emptied a .45 at it from about fifteen feet. Man, you've got to come right over and see this!"

"I've got a date with Lila," I said.

"She can wait. Come on. This'll give you something to talk to her about."

Well, there was plenty of time, so I went over. Ned's house was just a short walk, and I went up his drive and down into the basement through the back, the way I always did.

Ned and Luke were waiting for me, and I saw right away that they were really jazzed up about something. They stood there under the shaded lamp near the workbench that was always loaded with guns, and they were grinning like mad, real lit up. The gunpowder smell in the air was thick.

Ned had his shirt off, and he was wearing one of his vests. The ideal bulletproof vest combines a maximum of protection with a maximum of comfort, and doesn't bind you in your movements. Ned's vest was like a silky, shining two-layer underwear shirt that strapped on under his left arm, and it had four or five little bumps where slugs had penetrated the top layer. I'd seen it, or others like it down there in the basement a hundred times.

"The thing actually *catches* the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bullets," Luke said first thing, just like we were right in the middle of a conversation.

"Hurts like hell," Ned said, grinning, "but I don't have any broken ribs—not a scratch, nothing!"

"Wait a minute," I said, "don't tell me you monkeys have been testing that thing with Ned wearing it?"

"We've both tried it," Luke said. "Ned's going to make a fortune with that thing!"

"We've only used .22's, of course, on ourselves." Ned sounded real modest. "I wouldn't want to try anything more powerful on a live subject without a lot more testing —"

"You guys must be nuts!" I said.

Well, nothing would do but they just had to show me. Me, I didn't want them to show me. Look, I've already admitted it; I'm an ex-pro, I used to pack heavy tools for a reason, and I know what they can do. But pretty soon Ned was standing on one side of the shaded overhead lamp, and Luke stood on the other side, and they were about twenty feet apart.

Then Luke picked up a little .22 revolver that looked like a lady's purse pistol.

They acted very confident, both of them, but I saw they were holding their breaths, and believe you me, so was I.

Crack!

Sounded like a firecracker going off.

Ned grabbed at his chest and jumped like he'd been stung, and he and Luke laughed like they were relieved. And don't think I wasn't!

We all stared at the new bump that was on the front of the vest, and Ned unfastened the buckles under his left arm. "Want to try it?" he asked me.

"You aren't firing any .22 at me, buddy," I said. "You aren't firing so much as a BB at me!"

They both laughed like I was the funniest clown on earth.

"I'll tell you what," Ned said, "you fire the .22 at me."

"Oh, no!"

"Don't be chicken. I'll just change the outer layer of the vest first—if you were to hit one of the slugs that's already in this one, you might pump it right into me."

And those guys had been firing again and again into a vest with the same outer layer!

Well, Ned kept insisting that I help him test the vest, and somehow his changing that outer layer made me feel better about it. And after all, he and Luke had tested the thing a number of times before I'd ever showed up, and I'd seen the thing work with my own eyes.

So pretty soon I let Luke put the .22 into my hand, but I backed up so that there was a good twenty-five feet between me and Ned.

"Aim right at the center of my chest," Ned said.

I was careful. I hadn't used a toy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like this since I was a kid. I didn't know what it would be like.

I lifted the plinker straight up, cocked it, and took a deep breath. I held my breath and leveled the gun. I aimed straight at Ned's chest, just the way he'd said.

I squeezed the trigger, and the gun cracked.

Ned gave me a kind of astonished look as he grabbed at his chest, then he dropped like he was poleaxed.

For a few seconds Luke and I just stood there, and I couldn't believe what had happened. Then Luke sort of jumped toward Ned and kneeled down over him. He tore the buckles loose and pulled the vest open, and I saw something red, not much, on Ned's bare chest.

And I knew just what had happened.

"He's dead," Luke said in a kind of whisper.

Then he looked at me, and he said again, "He's dead."

Sick?

You'll never know how sick I felt. I couldn't even think, I felt so sick. I walked over the bench and put the gun down with the others. There was a chair nearby, and I sank down on it, and put my face in my hands.

Ned. One of my two best friends. And I had killed him. He was dead, and I had killed him.

I sat there, trying to breathe deep, fighting the sickness that was going all through me.

And pretty soon, with every breath I drew, I realized what deep trouble I was in.

An ex-con.

A three-time loser, on parole.

A known heavy who'd been in and out of jail most of his life. Suspected of having put more than one other heavy out of the action.

Now the killer of an Honest John, a pillar of the community, a leading businessman.

Buddy-boy, I thought, *this isn't just another accidental death from a loaded gun. You've just bought yourself a ticket straight back to Joliet, and maybe for the rest of your life.*

Suddenly I realized that Luke was standing over me.

"Listen," he said in a low voice, very urgently, "I know what this means to you. But I can swear that it wasn't your fault—"

"I'm on parole," I said. "That won't keep them from sending me back. You just don't know."

"Then you'd better get out of here. Nobody could have heard the shot. Even if someone saw you arrive and sees you leave, we can say that Ned was alive while you were here. You go keep your date, and I'll fix things so it looks like Ned had an accident while he was trying to test the vest on himself."

You think I wasn't tempted?

But I was no fool. Anything and everything could go wrong. The cops wouldn't find any scorch marks on the vest, and they'd figure

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there had to be a killer. Luke was a witness to the killing, and sooner or later he'd talk. Squares almost always did. And Ned was his brother.

But even if Luke did stand up for me, ten to one said I'd lose my parole at the very least. And at the worst . . .

With my record—ex-con, three-time loser—they could hang another five or ten years on me for manslaughter at the very least. And with any luck a good prosecutor could parlay it clear up to life.

But I'd sworn that I'd never go back.

Then I realized there was a way to increase the odds in my favor.

Everybody knew about Ned and Luke and Marie.

Sure, they also knew what buddies Ned and Luke were, but they wouldn't be the first buddies or brothers to fall out over a woman. What if Ned had pumped several shots into Luke, enough to kill him fast but not too fast for Luke to get off one shot with the .22 to Ned's heart?

I could fix up powder marks on their hands later.

You don't think I *liked* having thoughts like this, do you? These guys were the best friends I had in all the world, and I was feeling sicker every minute!

But I also had Number One to think about.

And years, probably the rest of my life, behind bars.

So I did what had to be done.

I stood up. I walked over to the bench—staggered is more the word—and I picked up a Walther that was lying there, a loaded clip right near it. I slid the clip into the receiver.

Luke was saying, "All you've got to do—"

He didn't get to say anything more. He just looked at me as I jacked a cartridge into place and turned toward him.

"I'm sorry about this, Luke," I said sincerely. "You'll never know how sorry I am."

Then I put three into his chest and one into his throat so that he couldn't talk. He lay there a minute, looking at me like he didn't understand, and I never felt worse in my life. His eyes did something funny, and that was that.

And right then this weird strangling sound came from behind me.

I looked around.

Ned was up on his knees. He was staring at me as he struggled to his feet. He took a few steps forward and looked down at Luke, and I felt like the world was coming to an end.

"You've killed him!" he said in a choked voice. "You've shot Luke!"

"I shot you," I managed to say.

"But it was a joke! A gag! Fake from beginning to end! A gun full of blanks, a little chicken blood—Luke was going to send you out of here to meet Lila, and we were going to take a short cut and be there

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to meet you! It was a joke, I tell you!"

"A joke," I said.

Well, you see how things stood. They stood exactly as I'd *thought* they stood only a minute or two before—except the other way around. One of my two best friends was dead, and the other was a witness to the fact that I'd killed him. And Ned was even more sure to talk than Luke would have been.

I put down the Walther and picked up a Woodsman.

What else could I do?

You don't think I *wanted* to do it, do you? After all they'd done for me, the two best friends I'd ever had?

I mean, I'm not some kind of a monster, am I?

Am I?

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE HARDCOVERS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	DUE DATE
Ambler, Eric	DIRTY STORY	Atheneum	$5.95	10/2
Braly, Malcolm	ON THE YARD	Little, Brown	5.95	10/24
Cleeve, Brian	DEATH OF A BITTER ENGLISHMAN	Random House	4.50	11/2
Cooper, Edmund	A FAR SUNSET	Walker & Co.	3.95	11/10
Creasey, John	HERE COMES THE TOFF	Walker & Co.	3.95	11/14
Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan	THE ANNOTATED SHERLOCK HOLMES (Edited, with an Introduction by William S. Baring-Gould)	Crown	25.00	12/1
Harvester, Simon	BATTLE ROAD	Walker & Co.	3.95	11/3
Hitchcock, Alfred (Ed.)	ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS: STORIES THAT SCARED EVEN ME	Random House	6.95	11/2
Leblanc, Maurice	THE CONFESSIONS OF ARSENE LUPIN	Walker & Co.	3.95	11/20
Moser, Don & Cohen, Jerry	THE PIED PIPER OF TUCSON (True Crime)	New American Library	4.95	11/13
O'Donnell, Lillian	THE TACHI TREE	Abelard-Schuman	3.95	11/28
Pentecost, Hugh	DEAD WOMAN OF THE YEAR	Dodd, Mead	3.95	11/6
Procter, Maurice	EXERCISE HOODWINK	Harper & Row	4.50	11/22
Wills, Gary & Demaris, Ovid	JACK RUBY: THE MAN WHO KILLED THE MAN WHO KILLED KENNEDY	New American Library	4.95	11/25
York, Jeremy	FIND THE BODY	Macmillan	4.50	11/1

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE PAPERBACKS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	DUE DATE
Eberhart, Mignon G.	R.S.V.P. MURDER	Popular Library	.60	11/21
Frome, David	TWO AGAINST SCOTLAND YARD	Popular Library	.60	11/7
MacInnes, Helen	REST AND BE THANKFUL	Crest	.75	11/14
Stark, Richard	THE GREEN EAGLE SCORE	Gold Medal (Orig.)	.50	10/31
Thompson, Jim	IRONSIDE	Popular Library (Orig.)	.60	19/21
Tiger, John	I SPY #6: DOOMDATE	Popular Library (Orig.)	.60	11/7

Titles and Data Supplied by the Publishers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the *NEWEST* Miss Phipps story by

PHYLLIS BENTLEY

It all started for Miss Phipps when Inspector Tarrant's wife arranged for the detective novelist to have her hair done. A writer, with her literary radar working, can see and hear a great deal in a beauty salon —especially in an elegant and posh establishment like Chez Basil. The situation developed into two triangles, and surely Miss Phipps was the perfect detective (snoop, if you wish) to bisect a pair of triangles—if that's what one does to untangle a double triangle . . .

MISS PHIPPS GOES TO THE HAIRDRESSER

by PHYLLIS BENTLEY

BRITTLESEA WAS HAVING ITSELF A Festival—the Brittlesea Summer Festival of the Arts.

"It's quite a nice coat, Mary," faltered Miss Phipps in a deprecating tone. "I really can't see why you fear for my appearance at the Festival."

"It's a *lovely* coat, Aunt Marian," said Mary Tarrant. For indeed it was lovely—a longish Oriental-looking coat of white satin embroidered in silver with intricate arabesque designs. Worn over the matching white satin gown, plain and sleeveless, which Miss Phipps had acquired as a complement, the effect would be most handsome. At present the two garments lay extended on the bed in the Tarrants' spare room of their house in Brittlesea, which Miss Phipps was occupying as a guest. "Yes, it's lovely. But that only makes it worse."

"Worse?" faltered Miss Phipps again, increasingly dismayed.

"Yes, worse. Aunt Marian," said Mary, with all the appearance of one nerving herself to utter a terrible truth, "You can't go to the banquet tonight, you can't wear that beautiful coat, with your hair in that condition."

"My hair?" murmured Miss Phipps, dumfounded. She raised one hand to her short unruly mop, which she was accustomed to wash herself, hastily and often, and then run a comb through strongly in a backward direction. "What's the matter with it?"

"Everything! No, that's not true. The hair itself is splendid—thick and a nice creamy white and with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a broad natural wave. But it's a *mess*, Aunt Marian! It's all different lengths, it's got no shape—one doesn't know whether that zigzag part is intentional—it looks as if different parts belonged to different persons. In short," said the American-bred Mary, producing this English idiom triumphantly, "it looks as if you had been pulled through a hedge backwards. It's an insult to our Mayor, the first woman in Brittlesea to hold the office, to attend her Festival dinner with hair like that; it's an insult to women; and it's an insult to that superb coat."

Here Mary, whose voice had risen almost to a scream, broke off and burst into tears. At this young Johnny, hitherto a placid bystander, also broke into tears and flung his arms round his mother's knees.

"I'm sorry, Aunt Marian," wept Mary, burying her face in Miss Phipps's shoulder. Being much taller than Miss Phipps, she had to stoop to do so, which made it somehow—to coin a word, thought Miss Phipps ruefully—worse.

"But it's all true?"

"Yes, it's all true," Mary sobbed.

"You've been wanting to tell me this for some time?"

"Well—yes," admitted Mary.

"There, there," said Miss Phipps soothingly, patting her shoulder. "Don't cry, Johnny, Mummy isn't hurt. Let's all go downstairs and have a cup of tea."

Mary stopped weeping, but she did not move.

"But what can I do about it?" said Miss Phipps, sensing that there was more to be heard.

"You must go to a really good hairdresser and have a really good set," Mary insisted.

She took her head from Miss Phipps's shoulder, but did not meet her eyes—stooping down instead to attend to Johnny's eyes and nose.

"But surely all the Brittlesea hairdressers will be booked up today," said Miss Phipps hopefully. "If I take your implication aright, every woman attending the Festival banquet will be busy cutting and curling, so—"

"Aunt Marian," said Mary firmly, raising her head, "I'm ashamed to tell you this. I agree I've behaved badly, but the truth is, I've booked an appointment for you at three o'clock this afternoon—at Basil's on the Promenade."

"You should have told me sooner, Mary," said Miss Phipps. She spoke sadly; the thought that she had become intimidating to Mary distressed her.

"Yes, I should have—but I got all hot and bothered about it. In case you'd be annoyed. I seem to get hot and bothered about lots of things nowadays," said Mary shakily.

A sudden delightful idea coursed through Miss Phipps's active brain.

"Perhaps there's a special reason for that?" she suggested.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Perhaps there is," said Mary meekly, smoothing Johnny's curls with great care.

"Well, I hope it's a little girl this time," cried Miss Phipps joyously.

"Aunt Marian, you're a *brick!*" cried Mary.

"Is this your usual line, madam?" inquired the pleasant young man in the white coat, pressing the waves above Miss Phipps's ears with knowledgeable fingers.

Miss Phipps, dropped by Mary at the white-painted establishment labeled *Chez Basil* in cursive golden script, had entered it with a good deal of alarm and despondency. However, she was soon reassured. Everything was brilliantly clean and extremely comfortable, and the comely young creatures who stood about (on marvelous legs) and attended to customers were clad in coveralls of a charming deep shade of rose.

But Miss Phipps attached less importance to their coveralls than to their courtesy; they guided her through the preliminaries of reception and hat removing (the day was too hot to wear a coat) without stressing her unfamiliarity with these, suggested that she remove her spectacles, shampooed her hair backward (as Miss Phipps thought of it) without allowing water to run down her spine, restored her glasses, and put a cosy warm towel over her head while she waited for her allotted young coiffeur to be free—all the time smiling kindly and speaking in quiet friendly tones.

It was while the young man put up her hair in rollers that Miss Phipps began to be reconciled to her sojourn in *Chez Basil*. The airy rollers were of different sizes and different colors; this intrigued her, and she began to wonder, and to find amusement in wondering, which of them would be used where, and why. But when, the roller installation completed, she sat under the drier in a mauve wrapper, with a glossy woman's magazine in her lap, her enjoyment became actually positive. The magazine she disregarded, but the customers were fascinating.

There was the young girl with very dark smooth hair whose tresses were being sheared off, Miss Phipps thought, far too lavishly. As the rose linen sheet which had been spread beneath her chair became strewn with dark strands and tufts, the girl's expression, which Miss Phipps could see in the mirror, became one of mingled triumph and fright; it was an expression that would take a couple of paragraphs—and not short ones either, mused Miss Phipps—to elucidate and describe.

"I might make a story out of this," reflected Miss Phipps, and at once the keenness of her observation increased.

Presently the rose linen sheet was taken up, the tufts were collected

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in an elegant rose-colored paper bag inscribed *Chez Basil,* and handed to the girl. She put the bag into her purse, moved to another chair, and took on the ugly, soap-smothered appearance common to the shampooed. Miss Phipps lost interest in her. But there were others to engage her attention.

There was an elderly lady, very cheerful and talkative—an American, Miss Phipps guessed, who was attending the Brittlesea Festival after a quick tour of Europe. As her gray hair was neatly coiled about her head she delivered a monologue which Miss Phipps, under the tyranny of the drier, could not hear; but she guessed it to be a shrewd travelogue.

There were three highly respectable ladies in middle life—"Councillors' wives, I feel sure," thought Miss Phipps—who with frowning absorption consulted pocket notebooks, made out shopping lists, and read letters. They kept their heads down virtuously and knew nothing of what went on around them; they were obviously interested only in themselves.

There was the altogether delightful young married woman in rather crumpled white who came in with a deep round box in one hand and the leash of a white poodle in the other—a nice poodle too, not oddly clipped (this Miss Phipps detested) but wearing his own charmingly curly coat in its natural growth. The girl had a very agreeable face—not brilliantly beautiful, not even conventionally pretty, just young and fresh and good. Her hair, straight, thick, cut fairly short, lay in a shapely bell about her head.

"How difficult it is to find the right word for that color of hair," mused Miss Phipps. "*Blonde* is too pale, *fair* is too insipid. It's not saffron enough for *yellow,* and not quite lustrous enough for *golden,* and too delicate by far for *straw.* It is, *tawny,* perhaps? I don't know. At any rate, a good color. Warm, sunny, honest. Shaded here and there. Good gray eyes, too. A nice girl. Obviously, from the way the assistants greet her, a regular and valued customer."

A man now came hurriedly out from behind a curtain at the back of the shop, which concealed a staircase. It did not escape Miss Phipps's novelist's eye that he had been summoned, for he was followed by one of the rose-clad attendants, who came out with the air of an errand well performed, smiling.

A small, dark, large-eyed, well-groomed, pale little man, fortyish, in a spotless white short coat, lavender shirt, and bow tie, he hurried at once to the sunny-haired girl, in short springy eager steps.

"This," decided Miss Phipps, "is obviously Basil."

He began to cut the tawny girl's hair, employing, Miss Phipps thought, considerable skill, gentle handling, and a great deal of care.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Though she could not hear a word he said, his eager gush of speech was plain to see and it struck Miss Phipps as pathetic, for the girl appeared to give only a vague occasional murmur in reply, and was otherwise silent.

"He adores her and she doesn't know he's there," decided Miss Phipps.

The hair styling finished, the girl made a quiet gesture toward the deep round box she had brought with her. Basil untied its gold cord and took off its lid (inscribed *Chez Basil*) with much *empressement.* Miss Phipps could not, however, see what was inside the box since Basil blocked her line of sight. After a few minutes of animated talk the lid was replaced and Basil took the box reverently away into a small room at the rear.

At this point one of the rose-clad attendants came and released Miss Phipps from the drier, led her to a seat before a mirror, and began to dismantle her rollers. She became aware of her restored ability to hear when a new customer entered the shop.

"Lesley!" drawled the newcomer, advancing at once upon the tawny girl.

"Hello, Sybille," said Lesley pleasantly. "Preening for tonight, like the rest of us?"

"Of course," said Sybille with just a touch of scorn.

Though she doesn't look as if she needed any preening, thought Miss Phipps, observing in the mirror before her Sybille's complex and elegant hairdo, every dark strand smooth and intact.

"She's very elegant altogether. Beautiful slim figure, superb complexion, long dark lashes—artificial, though, I think—a really interesting dress of a strange pale bronze hue, shoes and gloves and bag in gleaming bronze that match exactly. She makes dear Lesley look a little sloppy," thought Miss Phipps ruefully.

"And you?" drawled Sybille.

"Just a trim," said Lesley.

"And how is dear Canon Floyd?" inquired Sybille.

Strange how one word can create a hostile impression when it is excessive in sentiment, thought Miss Phipps, disliking Sybille instantly. *Dear* Canon Floyd, indeed! Insincere pussy! She doesn't care a row of pins for Canon Floyd, whoever he may be.

"My father is not convalescing quite as well as I could wish," replied Lesley. Her tone was formal, reserved, and she turned her head aside rather sharply; from this Miss Phipps deduced that the Canon was seriously ill, and that his daughter loved him.

Basil returned, and bowing politely but without enthusiasm, greeted Sybille as Mrs. Mortimer, and withdrew again to the rear. Miss Phipps's young hairdresser now approached and began to brush out her curls, and Miss

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Phipps temporarily lost interest in Lesley and Sybille, especially as her view of them was now somewhat obscured by the lad behind her.

"Is this your usual line, madam?" he inquired, adjusting the waves above her ears with knowledgeable fingers.

Miss Phipps gazed at herself in the mirror, aghast. A distinguished-looking, well-groomed, haughty, totally unrecognizable person gazed back at her.

"Well," she began timidly, "perhaps a little less—"

She was interrupted by a disturbance behind her. Turning quickly, she saw a tall, handsome, brown-haired, scowling young man stride furiously through the shop. There was a sharp bark, a confusion of voices, a scrape of chairs, then the tall athletic young man strode through the shop again, dragging the alarmed poodle, who looked backward appealingly at Lesley following hastily behind him.

"I must pay," objected Lesley, looking flushed and disturbed as she opened her purse.

"There's no time," said the young man sharply, continuing his angry stride.

"Another day, another day," said Basil soothingly, approaching at a run and waving his hands.

In the background Mrs. Mortimer smiled with some malice, and raised her eyebrows as man, dog, and Lesley rushed out of the shop.

"Is this madam's usual line?" persisted Miss Phipps's coiffeur.

"Well—yes, I suppose so," said the reluctant but intimidated Miss Phipps.

The American lady, who had now belatedly decided to have a manicure, nodded at her approvingly.

Inspector Tarrant in his dress uniform with a couple of medals, Mary in a primrose silk which enhanced the luster of her brown hair, Miss Phipps in the white and silver Oriental coat, stood in the reception room of the Brittlesea Town Hall, drinking cocktails amid a crowd of equally well dressed persons, similarly engaged. Miss Phipps thought their trio made a very good appearance, and beamed happily.

In the distance she saw Lesley, again in white (not new in fashion). At her side stood the handsome young man, in the uniform of an Army officer. Miss Phipps was interested to see that signs of mutual acquaintance passed between Lesley and Mary.

"Who is that fair-haired girl? With the good-looking Captain, over there?" she asked.

"That's Mrs. Carey. We attend the same cookery class at the Brittlesea Technical Institute—that's how I know her. Her husband is with her."

"He's stationed at the barracks just outside Brittlesea—his regi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment is the Southshire Buffs. Very nice chap. A bit hot-tempered at times," enlarged John Tarrant.

"And a bit jealous too, from all I hear," said Mary disapprovingly. "So silly—his wife's as good as gold, and so devoted to him."

"But very attractive," said Inspector Tarrant.

"Captain Carey's very attractive too," said Mary.

"But a decent fellow," repeated Inspector Tarrant. "I have to deal with him sometimes, you know, when some of the men of the regiment get into a spot of bother."

"And who's the slinky beauty in skin-tight black standing next to them?" inquired Miss Phipps, gazing disapprovingly at Mrs. Mortimer's smile. "I know her name."

"Mrs. Mortimer is a rich widow who has a bijou residence on the Promenade," said Mary drily.

"She seems rather interested in Captain Carey," commented Miss Phipps, observing Sybille's play of lip and eye.

"She's interested in any man," said Mary as before. "Any man, period."

"But perhaps especially in Captain Carey?"

"I don't really know," said Mary. "Perhaps."

Dinner was announced. The speeches were perhaps slightly better than the average of Mayoral-banquet speeches. Miss Phipps's response to the toast of "The Guests" was well received.

The next night was the occasion of a concert given in Brittlesea's Pavilion by an orchestra of international repute. The vast Victorian structure of glass and iron, situated on the outer end of Brittlesea's pier and built, of course, in pre-automobile days, presented parking problems of quite staggering proportions. Cars were, of course, not allowed on the wooden-plank pier.

Inspector Tarrant dropped his wife and Miss Phipps at the land end of the pier, and drove off, like everybody else, in search of a place to leave his car. The two women walked along the pier—fortunately the night was fine and warm—entered the foyer and stood waiting for him. They had no wraps to check and therefore nothing to occupy their time. In the bustle and chatter of the foyer Mary began to wilt.

"Let us go into the auditorium, dear," suggested Miss Phipps.

"John gave me all the tickets," hesitated Mary.

"You go in. Give me John's ticket and mine, and I'll wait for him."

Mary agreed with relief, and Miss Phipps was left alone.

The incoming audience swelled to a crowd, eased off to a comfortable throng, thinned to a slow stream, became a mere few latecomers rushing up the steps. Among the last arrivals were Captain Carey and Inspector Tarrant.

"Where's Mary?"

"She went in."

"Good. Come along."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Captain Carey reached the ticket taker ahead of them.

"Has my wife gone in, Bradshaw?" he demanded. His voice was loud and harsh, and his face flushed.

"I don't think so, sir," said the elderly Bradshaw, who had the look of an ex-soldier.

"You mean she hasn't, don't you," shouted Captain Carey.

"I couldn't say for certain, sir," replied Bradshaw firmly. "Best go in and see, sir."

With an angry mutter Carey swung away, outward toward the steps. Unluckily, at this moment Basil came running up the steps into the foyer. Without a word of warning Captain Carey hit him hard across the mouth. Basil stumbled sideways and fell on his hands and knees.

Miss Phipps rushed to him and pulled him upright; Inspector Tarrant seized Captain Carey by the arm; with one accord they pushed the combatants—not that poor Basil was much of a combatant, reflected Miss Phipps—into a side room, and the Inspector with his free left hand closed the door behind the four of them.

Miss Phipps dumped Basil into a velvet chair and began to dab his mouth, which was bleeding, with her all-too-small lace-edged evening handkerchief.

"I'm an officer of the police," said Inspector Tarrant in a stern official tone. "Do you wish to prefer charges, Mr. Basil? The assault was entirely unprovoked, and there were witnesses."

"No, no! Of course not," panted Basil. "On no account."

"It wasn't entirely unprovoked, Inspector," said Carey grimly.

"I saw no provocation."

"I don't wish to discuss it here."

"Then I must ask you to accompany me to the Brittlesea police headquarters."

"No, no!" exclaimed Miss Phipps, viewing with horror the prospect of the young officer's career being wrecked.

Basil stood up. "I slipped and fell against the wall of the foyer, Inspector," he said, his light voice unexpectedly firm, "and that will be my testimony."

"If you are certain of that, sir, of course there's no more to be said."

"I should prefer to be charged," raged Carey. "The man's a blackguard and a scoundrel."

"I don't know what grounds you have for saying that, Captain Carey," said Basil in a tone of astonishment.

"Yes, you do. You know perfectly well."

"Believe me, I have no idea."

"I don't believe you."

The door of the room was flung open, and Lesley Carey came in. She ran straight to her husband and took his arm.

"Bradshaw told me you were in this room, Gerard," she said. "What's the matter? What has hap-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pened?" Looking quickly round the room, she saw Basil, his mouth still bleeding, and gave an "Oh!" of dismay.

The Captain disengaged his arm from her hand.

"Where have you been this last half hour, Lesley?" he said. His utterance was now quiet, but ominous.

"I went across the Square to look in on father," said Lesley. "You *knew* I was going to see him—I *told* you, Gerard."

"Liar!" burst forth Carey in furious anger. "I saw you at the entrance to this little whippersnapper's flat."

"Oh, rubbish!" exclaimed Lesley.

"Yes. The small porch entrance at the side of his shop, which leads up a staircase to his flat. I *saw* you, Lesley."

"That's absolute nonsense, Gerard," said Lesley.

"I tell you I *saw* you."

"I have not seen Mrs. Carey since yesterday afternoon, when you called for her at my salon," said Basil quietly.

"Of course you would say that to defend her."

"It is true I have much respect for Mrs. Carey," said Basil. "Too much, I assure you, to lie about her."

Really the little man came out of this clash extremely well, thought Miss Phipps. It is not easy to retain one's dignity with a lip cut and swollen, a bow tie under one's ear, and a collar bloodstained; but he achieved it.

"I saw her at your door," insisted Captain Carey.

"We are keeping these good people from the concert," said Lesley, suddenly icy. "I shall go and stay at my father's and await your apology, Gerard. You are really too insulting. I can't stand this endless silly jealousy any more."

Her voice quavered on this last sentence, and she left the room in a rush, as if fearing the collapse of her composure.

"Please go into the auditorium, Miss Phipps—Mary will be anxious at our absence," said Inspector Tarrant formally. "I will ring for an ambulance for you, sir; you must have that cut attended to at once."

He left the room, followed by Basil.

"But I *saw* her! Don't you understand, I *saw* her!" said Captain Carey, turning to Miss Phipps. "Does he think I don't know my own wife? It's not as if it were twilight, or autumn, or something of that sort; it's high summer, only seven o'clock, bright daylight, golden sunshine, and I wasn't fifty yards from her. I *saw* her."

He spoke the word *golden* with a wincing emphasis which revealed to Miss Phipps's novelist's ear that he thought of his wife's hair by that loving epithet, and his handsome young face was so contorted with anguish that Miss Phipps felt extremely sorry for him. She believed every word he said. Unfortunately she also believed Lesley and Basil.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm sure there must be an explanation which will make everything clear," she said soothingly.

But she could not for the life of her think what it might be as, next morning, she visited all the locales of this regrettable triangle.

The previous evening had been decidedly uncomfortable. As the orchestra had begun to play by the time Miss Phipps was finished with Captain Carey, who suddenly flung himself out of the building, she was not allowed to enter the auditorium, but was ushered politely back into the same side room to await the end of the Beethoven symphony. Miss Phipps, who had particularly wished to hear this orchestra's performance of the Eroica (very familiar but still a great favorite), was vexed, and her vexation was not diminished by the behavior of the car drivers, men and women, who, late because of parking difficulties or mere unpunctuality, were likewise confined to the side room. Apparently untroubled by missing the Beethoven, the others had argued so vigorously about the parking problem in Brittlesea that the wearied Miss Phipps felt she knew every back street, road, and square in the vicinity of the pier.

Among these late-comers was Mrs. Mortimer, who swept in impressively clad in a white sheath which made poor Lesley's full chiffon—which she had worn the night before—look decidedly outmoded. This again had vexed Miss Phipps, and she observed rather crossly with what admiring attention (quite insincere) Mrs. Mortimer had turned her brilliant dark eyes (belladonna drops) on all the males and had roused their admiration for her hair by raising a hand in a languid gesture to smooth it.

When at last the symphony was finished and the prisoners were released, Miss Phipps found Mary white and anxious, but had to wait for the intermission before she could tell her the whole story. In the foyer they had been met by Inspector Tarrant, who found them seats and coffee with masterly competence, but then stood in front of them without a smile.

"How I dislike that woman!" Miss Phipps had exclaimed irritably as the beautiful Mrs. Mortimer strolled by, a man on either hand. "Really, rich young widows are a menace to the community."

"That's rather too sweeping, Aunt Marian," Inspector Tarrant had objected heavily.

His gloomy mood was still with him next morning. When Miss Phipps asked him at breakfast where he had parked the previous night, where Captain Carey had parked, and had he seen Mrs. Carey in the doorway leading to Basil's flat, he replied shortly, even snappily; if Miss Phipps had not listened to the parking talk last night she would have been completely at sea.

"No, I did *not* see Mrs. Carey," he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said with irritable precision. "I parked in Smith Street, which runs from High Street into the Promenade, at right angles; I walked up to the Promenade and along the Promenade and I saw Captain Carey emerge ahead of me from Taylor Street, a street parallel to Smith Street, some hundred yards or so nearer the Pier. I followed him along the Promenade, gradually narrowing the distance between us. *Chez Basil—*" he had pronounced the words with immense disgust—"is farther along the Promenade, nearer the Pier. At the entrance to the Pier, Captain Carey paused and looked back along the Promenade, and I drew near to him."

"And where does Canon Floyd live?"

"In Taylor Square. The Square is to the left of Taylor Street. Nearer the Pier."

"Then Mrs. Carey could hardly have reached *Chez Basil—*"

"Yes, she could. There are streets parallel to the Promenade, leading out of Taylor Square, and other streets leading up at right angles to the Promenade. If Carey had as much difficulty finding a parking space in Taylor Street as I had in Smith Street, which is all too probable, she could well have reached *Chez Basil* by another route, before him. Mrs. Mortimer, whom I saw later approaching the Pavilion, as I went with Basil to summon the ambulance," added Inspector Tarrant drily, anticipating Miss Phipps's question, "lives on the Promenade, at the corner of Taylor Street. She could well have seen Captain Carey coming up Taylor Street from her corner window, watched him pass, and followed him. But in that very tight shift, or whatever you call it—"

"Sheath," put in Mary.

"She probably couldn't walk fast enough to catch up to him. Indeed, she couldn't have done so, because she didn't catch up with me, and I was some yards behind Carey. So if you think she persuaded Captain Carey to believe he saw his wife at Basil's entrance, Aunt Marian, you are wrong. Is there anything more you want to know?"

"No, thank you," said Miss Phipps meekly.

"I'm glad of that. Let me say that I shall be extremely displeased if you attempt any interference in the Carey affair, Aunt Marian. It would be most uncalled-for, and most unwise."

"They are two good young people, unhappily estranged," said Miss Phipps, firing up.

"Never interfere between a man and his wife," pronounced Inspector Tarrant, gloomier than before.

"Just let them remain unhappy, eh?"

"I believe Captain Carey—that he did see his wife."

"So, so do I. But I believe Lesley and Basil too."

"How can you?"

"That's what I propose to find out," said Miss Phipps.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"They contradict each other."

"Not necessarily," said Miss Phipps staunchly.

"How do you make that out?"

"We shall see."

Inspector Tarrant gave a hollow laugh and left for headquarters.

"Will you come with me, Mary?" said Miss Phipps. "I must see these places for myself."

"I think I'd better not," hesitated Mary. "John seems so upset. Of course he never tells me anything about his work, but I think—I *think* it's just *possible,* you know, that he may have seen Lesley Carey—just a glimpse, you know."

"Oh, *no!*" said Miss Phipps.

"I think John caught just a glimpse of her in the distance," repeated Mary.

Miss Phipps refused to believe it. But when she had seen Smith Street, Taylor Street, Taylor Square, and various other smaller streets, which were all laid out in rectangles as Inspector Tarrant had said, she perceived that his account of the movements of the characters (for she thought of them that way) was not only possible, but probably true. She felt daunted. Bracing herself, however, she walked along to *Chez Basil,* observed the little white porch at the side which covered the doorway of Basil's flat, and entered the shop next door firmly. The establishment, naturally enough for any morning, particularly a morning after two important evening functions, was rather empty.

"Madam," said Basil, bowing. "I believe I have reason to be grateful to you."

He looked pale and sad, and wore a strip of plaster at one end of his mouth. There was a touch of gray, Miss Phipps observed, above his ears.

"I should like to have a few words with you about last night's incident, if I may," she said.

Basil shrugged, and led her up the stairs behind the curtain.

The flat was extremely pleasant, with white paint, gray carpet, mauve-patterned gray curtains, mauve linen furniture covers, long white shelves of books—poetry, plays, biographies, intelligent fiction—on each side of the handsome inset radiator, a large record player and television set, and two startling but attractive modern paintings, originals. The view of the sea was, of course, delightful. Miss Phipps was alarmed. He's much more intellectual than poor young Captain Carey, she thought; but then, I don't suppose Lesley is very intellectual either.

"There are two entrances to your flat—one direct from the Promenade, one through the shop," she said, coming at once to the point.

"Yes. And there is a back exit from the shop into a lane behind," said Basil drily.

"Oh, dear. Then Mrs. Carey's visit to you, and her disappearance before her husband reached your porch, was perfectly possible."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It was possible," said Basil, "but it did not take place. Any suggestion that it did is totally untrue. Do you believe me, Miss—Phipps, is it?"

"I believe you. How did you come to follow Captain Carey to the Pier Pavilion?"

"I had a ticket for the concert, of course, since music is one of my great pleasures. I saw Captain Carey's car drive down the Promenade, looking for a parking place. I waited for him to come back, for I hoped that Mrs. Carey would be walking with him. It is a pleasure to me to see her. I intended to follow them at a distance. When he returned alone, I gave up hope of seeing her and left for the Pavilion. Yes, it is a pleasure to me to see her, but all the same, Miss Phipps, she did not visit me."

"She says she went to visit her father."

"Whatever Mrs. Carey says is true. Her father is very ill. Rest assured, Miss Phipps, that I shall make no charges against Captain Carey for his assault on me. I would not give Mrs. Carey such pain."

Miss Phipps was silent for a moment.

"Can you give me the names and addresses of all the customers who were in your salon the afternoon before the banquet?" she said at length.

"I can and will. My girls have orders to take the names and addresses of all new clients, and we already know those who have formerly visited us. I see no purpose in this, however."

"Anything is worth trying," said Miss Phipps.

Basil shrugged.

Miss Phipps, who while on lecture tours had traveled quite extensively in Mrs. Seaton's native State, found her very friendly and conversational. Indeed, she found herself lunching at the admirable hotel where that lady was staying, and discussing the capitals of Europe at length. The problem was to get her hostess back to the incidents at *Chez Basil,* which naturally held less interest for her than the Champs Elysées or the Colosseum.

"I came really to ask your help," said Miss Phipps, having truthfully agreed that the hotel coffee was not bad but not as good as that obtainable in the States. "Will you spare me a moment of your time?"

"Why, surely," said Mrs. Seaton. (Her face, however, fell just a trifle.)

"It has nothing to do with money," pursued Miss Phipps.

(Mrs. Seaton brightened.)

"We were in that hairdresser's called *Chez Basil* at the same time, the day before yesterday in the afternoon."

"We were," agreed Mrs. Seaton.

"Though you remained there longer than I did because of your manicure. Do you remember a rather good-looking young woman, with a white poodle?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes, indeed. A very fine head of hair. Very English-looking. My granddaughter's is similar, my eldest granddaughter that is," began Mrs. Seaton, reminiscing. Miss Phipps listened patiently, and presently brought her back to *Chez Basil*. "But that noisy young man, I guess he was her husband! What terrible manners! What a way to behave! He must have been out of his mind! Do you know why he was so mad, Miss Phipps?"

"I think he was troubled by jealousy."

"Men!" exclaimed Mrs. Seaton putting a world of feeling into just one word. "My son-in-law—my younger son-in-law, that is—but you don't want to hear about him. My husband always says, 'Elvira, you talk either too much or too little.' He's right, you know. He wouldn't come to Brittlesea with me. 'No, Elvira,' he said, 'you go ahead and enjoy your night; I haven't finished with London yet.' I wanted to come to the Festival, you see; I wanted to see Sir Mervyn—" here Mrs. Seaton mentioned the name of a very famous actor—"in the play tonight. *Twelfth Night*. Yes. I do *love* your Shakespeare," said Mrs. Seaton, beaming. "He's ours too, of course."

"We have tickets for the first night, tonight," murmured Miss Phipps hastily. Having got into the conversation, she went on hastily, "Did you notice anything—well, significant—about that fair-haired girl, anything which might indicate any—connection—any intimacy between her and the hairdresser?"

"Why, no! What are you thinking of?" cried Mrs. Seaton in dismay, shocked to the depths of her Bostonian soul. "My thought was that he had a kind of reverence for her because of her beautiful hair, but she was quite unconscious of it. The only thing I noticed about her was that, being dragged off in a hurry like that—Colonel's tea party or no Colonel's tea party, but I think myself that was just her husband's excuse—she forgot her box; for which her husband will probably scold her, though it was all his fault."

"Ah, yes, I remember that deep round box," said Miss Phipps. "What—"

"Oval," Mrs. Seaton corrected her. "That dark beauty, her friend, took it for her—Basil gave it to her to deliver. I don't mean the young girl, the actress, who was having her hair trimmed. I mean the older woman, rather feline, wearing a Dior dress."

"Oh, it was a Dior—"

"Yes, indeed. I think Miss Jackson will make a charming Viola, don't you?"

"Oh, is she to play—"

"Yes, yes. The young girl who was having her hair trimmed. The boy who dressed my hair told me. I guess that was the reason for the very short hair. Well, I hope you won't think I'm rushing you, Miss Phipps, but I'm afraid I must leave you now. I must have my rest in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

afternoon, so Dr. Braun says. He's quite the best psychiatrist in the States; I go to him every Wednesday. Goodbye, Miss Phipps. We shall perhaps see each other at the theater tonight. Goodbye."

"Goodbye—and thank you immensely," said Miss Phipps.

But Mrs. Seaton was already disappearing up the stairs.

The receptionist at the quiet but reputable hotel which Miss Olive Jackson had given *Chez Basil* as her address looked grave when Miss Phipps inquired for the actress.

"She's at the theater. The Pavilion, you know," said the receptionist. "They're having some trouble with the scenery. It doesn't fit. A door's position may have to be changed, and that, I'm told, will alter the acting positions. Sir Mervyn is very cross about it."

Miss Phipps, wandering peacefully into the Pavilion auditorium, beheld the sight, always so fascinating to a theater-lover, of a bare stage in the process of being transformed into a scene.

"A permanent set," she thought as she stood in the center aisle, enjoying her own familiarity with theatrical terms. "Those steps are good. And that balcony. But oh, dear! That flat containing the door won't go in at the side. I can see that. I wonder what—"

"Who are *you?*" demanded a furious voice.

Miss Phipps turned in a flutter and found herself face to face with the great Sir Mervyn in a towering rage.

"Marian Phipps," she stammered.

"What are you doing here?" shouted Sir Mervyn, contracting his heavy eyebrows in a fearsome scowl.

"Well, I just wanted to see—" began Miss Phipps.

"Get this woman *out* of here!" roared Sir Mervyn to the young man beside him. "How often have I told you, idiot, that I will *not* have any outsiders present at rehearsals?"

The unlucky assistant stage manager, looking pale and scared, seized Miss Phipps's arm and hustled her out of the auditorium.

"I just wanted to see Miss Jackson," said Miss Phipps.

"Straight up those stairs, turn to the right, first along the corridor," whispered the A.S.M.

Miss Phipps, knocking at the door and entering the indicated dressing room, found Miss Jackson sitting in front of her mirror, wearing a huge woolen pullover and very tight pants, both of a dreary color and rather dirty. She looked despondent.

"Who are *you,* then?" she threw crossly over her shoulder, seeing Miss Phipps in the mirror and not troubling to turn.

"My name," began Miss Phipps, "is Marian Phipps. I—"

"Ought I to know it?"

"It would be nice if you did," said Miss Phipps, "but of course I don't expect—"

"What have you played?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I am a writer," said Miss Phipps, "of detective stories. I make no—"

"I haven't read them. Are any in paperback?"

"Six," snapped Miss Phipps.

"Oh. Sorry, I'm sure. What can I do for you, then?"

"I'm trying to right a wrong done to a young wife—" began Miss Phipps.

"The best of British luck to her, I'm sure."

"You may have noticed her in *Chez Basil* on Monday afternoon," persevered Miss Phipps. "She has very fair hair, quite noticeable."

"Oh, Goldilocks. Yes, I saw her, and dear Basil bowing at her feet, and the slinky dark lady hovering nearby, vulturewise."

"I'm glad you noticed her," said Miss Phipps, pressing on. "Because—"

"Oh, you noticed me, then?" said Miss Jackson with interest. "Are you coming to see us, then? Eh? Have you booked? You should, you know. You won't get in otherwise. I don't expect you've booked. Later on, of course, you'll try. Dickens said—in *Nicholas Nickleby,* you know, though I don't expect you do—that the British public never want to go a theater until they think they can't get in."

"I have already booked my seat for tonight," said Miss Phipps with some dignity. "And I certainly did notice you. I was interested by so much shearing off of your hair. I understand that now."

"You don't, you know."

"If you're playing Viola—"

"Oh, you know the play, do you?"

"Really, Miss Jackson, you are being extremely rude," said Miss Phipps, now in a rage as towering as Sir Mervyn's, though she lacked his resonant means of vocal expression. "I noticed you only because it intrigued me to see all your discarded tresses being gathered up and given back to you. I wondered why. That was all; I have no personal interest in you whatsoever."

"It was for my wig, of course," said Miss Jackson, a trifle disconcerted.

She pulled open a drawer in her dressing table, snatched the lid off a cardboard box which lay inside, and revealed a great mass of black hair, short and long. "See? I've got quite a lot now; be enough for a good wig quite soon now."

"Oh, I see!" said Miss Phipps in a friendlier tone. "As an actress, of course—"

"Nah, nah!" said Miss Jackson. "Not for the stage. You're not with it, my dear. Every smart girl has a wig nowadays. If she can afford it, that is. Head always in good trim. Swim in the sea, let the wild winds blow, put on the wig, hair keeps its line, waves not to and fro. Rather neat, don't you think? Of course you have to take it in for a set occasionally. Now, if you don't mind, would you please scarper? I'm supposed to be running through my lines."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes, I will leave you gladly," said Miss Phipps. "It is useless to expect any help from you, since you are interested only in yourself."

She sailed out of the dressing room and descended the shabby stairs with a quick and angry step.

"Miss Phipps!" called a voice from above.

Miss Phipps looked up. Over the railing leaned Miss Jackson, her slender legs asprawl.

"I'm sorry I was such a beast to you," she said. "Fact is, I'm all in a twitter about tonight, you know."

Miss Phipps, remembering the blackbrowed Sir Mervyn, forgave her at once.

"I don't wonder," she said sympathetically.

"Oh, well, not to worry. I was a bit narked, you know, about your nose in the air over my wig. Nowadays a wig isn't the sign of a scarlet woman, Miss Phipps. Your Goldilocks pal has one, you know. In that handsome box. On a proper stand and all. I bet she got it at a reduced price from her doting Basil."

"She has a what?" said Miss Phipps excitedly.

"A wig, of course. Golden-brown, made of her own *bee*yutiful hair."

Miss Phipps rushed for the door and took a taxi to the nearest telephone booth.

After last night's experience in parking, the Tarrant party took pains to arrive at the Pavilion early. Nearby parking was easily achieved.

"Miss Phipps?" sad Bradshaw, beaming. "I have a note for you, madam."

The note read simply: *We shall be delighted if you and Inspector and Mrs. Tarrant will join Mr. Basil and ourselves in our box. Gerard and Lesley Carey.*

"But we have our own seat tickets," demurred Inspector Tarrant.

"The box office will gladly sell them for you—there's a full house and a long queue waiting for returns," said Bradshaw.

"When you urged me on the phone to confront Mrs. Mortimer and ask her what she had done with my wife's wig, I thought you were entirely mad," said Captain Carey, beaming happily. "But the Colonel had heard about your clever detection at Star Isle school—the Headmaster's his brother, you know—so I risked it. She made a frightful scene, sobbing and throwing herself around, wailing all sorts of silly things about me, and 'How did you find out?' and so on. It seems she told Basil she would deliver the wig to Lesley, and she meant to do so, but this idea came into her head, you know. She saw Lesley and myself getting out of our car in Taylor Street, and Lesley going off toward Taylor Square, and she guessed Lesley was going to see the Canon, and she herself—Mrs. M., I mean—was wearing white like Lesley, and she just had this kind of compulsion to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stir up trouble between myself and Lesley—I can't imagine why!"—his handsome face flushing—"and she popped on the wig and nipped off to Basil's porch and then nipped round the corner when a big van came by, so I didn't see her disappear."

"I didn't see her from above," said Basil quietly, smiling as he turned to assist Mary Tarrant with her wrap.

"Well, I hope this will be a lesson to you, young man," said Miss Phipps to the Captain with mock sternness.

"Oh, it has. It has indeed," said Captain Carey. "You see," he murmured in Miss Phipps's ear, "I was always angry about that wig. I thought it was a present from Basil. But I didn't like to question Lesley about it, for fear it would look as if I didn't trust her. It turns out now, when we got it all out into the open, that her father paid for it, and she didn't like to tell me because I'm always a bit edgy about presents from her father, he being much deeper in the pocket than I am. Basil had *suggested* the wig, of course, but nothing further."

"Marital frankness," said Miss Phipps mildly, "often pays dividends."

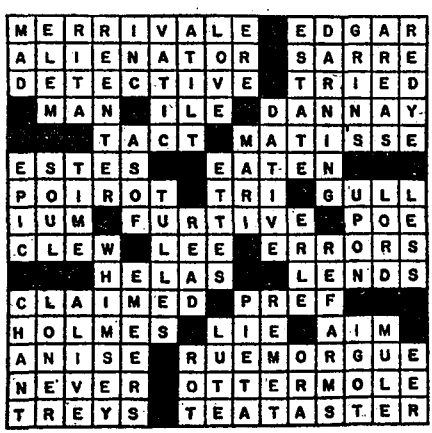
"I am so grateful to you, dear Miss Phipps," said Lesley, smiling, and she leaned forward and kissed Miss Phipps's cheek.

"Olive Jackson's Viola," said the *Southshire Post,* "had a rare quality of youthful sweetness. The young actress justly received a floral tribute from a member of the audience—the famous novelist, Miss Marian Phipps, guest of Inspector and Mrs. Tarrant—at the close of the first performance."

Solution to

DOUBLE CROSS-WORD PUZZLE

(Puzzle on page 44)



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

URSULA CURTISS

A distinguished new story by Ursula Curtiss—whose work never fails to be distinguished . . . "Change of Climate" is subtly conceived and beautifully executed. It is a story of quality . . .

CHANGE OF CLIMATE

by URSULA CURTISS

"ONE LAM CHOP," WROTE CHLOE Carpenter in her diary on an evening in late June—at nine years of age she had, and would have all her life, a natural talent for misspelling—"one baked potatoe, some string beans, a pice of apple pie." She studied the last item and then, because caret marks were still in her future and this was to be a very exact account, she crossed it out and wrote, "a small pice of apple pie."

Hester Carpenter had no idea that her daughter was keeping this meticulous record of Hester's food intake—fortunately; it would have made her self-conscious to the point of being unable to eat at all. But Tom Carpenter knew about it, and was both touched and approving. It seemed to him the day-by-day log of a miracle, although that was the very word he was supposed to avoid.

"Oh, she'll do better in the Southwest, no doubt about it," the doctor had said two months ago in Massachusetts. "In fact, to put it baldly, I doubt very seriously if she'd survive another winter here. But I have to warn you, Tom—after the first dramatic improvement there still may be difficulties. Chances are she'll acquire new allergies, and then there's always the existing damage. You mustn't expect a miracle."

Hester had never been really strong—it was her look of almost luminous fragility which had first caught Tom's eye; but she had not developed asthma until a year after their marriage. Or perhaps it had been there for some time, masquerading as frequent attacks of bronchitis and a faint but noticeable shortness of breath after activities like climbing stairs. In any case, the asthma had become sharply worse after Chloe's birth. At first there were seasons of the year when Hester was entirely free of it; gradually these periods shortened, and pneumonia began to make its appearance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They saw a parade of specialists —bald and conservative, young and daring, whose advice, with minor differences, came to much the same thing in the end: avoid the known allergens—among them, cat dander; pursue a dust-free routine in the house; and "learn to live with your illness."

Surprisingly enough, until Chloe was seven years old, they managed the last instruction almost as easily as the first two. Hester was determined not to become a professional invalid, or to make a martyr of her husband and a slave of her small daughter; and for a long time she succeeded. She hoarded her strength in unobtrusive ways; on bad days, when the sound of her breathing was like a loud and steady filing, she retired to piled pillows behind her bedroom door.

She had grown up in the small town of Falcon, Massachusetts, and Tom did not have to worry about her being lonely while he was at his office and Chloe at school. Girls she had known since high school dropped in, and neighbors made morning visits for coffee, usually bringing along a sumptuous homemade pastry at which Hester could only nibble. Chloe, arriving home at three o'clock, leaped enthusiastically into her role of "house-woman" —"Housewife, do you suppose she means?" Hester asked Tom, laughing—and polished everything that could possibly be polished: vases, candlesticks, tabletops.

As a result, the little house glowed more than the prescribed dust-free routine demanded; it held a concert of personalities as undivided as a clover. Hale and hearty visitors went away with an illogical feeling of envy; they said, "There's nothing like trouble to bind a family together," but they knew it was more than that.

When Chloe was almost eight, Hester had her first bad attack of pneumonia. Six months later she had another and worse one, shrouded in an oxygen tent while Tom spent two tormented nights at her bedside and the nurses smiled at him with terrifying cheerfulness.

He made the decision then, knowing that it meant giving up the well-paid job which had enabled him to meet the medical bills; giving up their home and their friends. Although it was not really a decision at all in the sense of choosing between alternatives, because it was clear now that there was no alternative. While Hester convalesced, much more slowly than ever before, he quietly organized the move to the Southwest.

June turned and became July. Hester had gained six pounds, and her pearly skin was acquiring a faint tan. The one unfortunate side effect from the change of climate—sinus trouble, which the doctor assured them could be alleviated by drops—seemed a small price to pay.

Chloe had been her mother's anx-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ious companion for too long to let go all at once, but little by little, as Hester grew stronger, Chloe explored a world strange to eastern eyes—a world with fleet little blue lizards, roadrunners, and even, in their landlord's back field, an aristocratic but friendly horse that came promptly up to the fence for the carrot or apple she brought. In spite of the wanderings which seemed to her boundless, but were actually contained in less than a half acre, Chloe was always in the driveway to greet Tom when he got home from work.

She was there on a late afternoon in mid-July, wiry, sunburnt, and clearly bursting with something. When Tom asked his ritual, "What did you do today?" she said excitedly, "Oh, Daddy, I helped Mrs. Whitman tear up all her flowers. Look!"

Tom did not merely look; he gaped, appalled. Mrs. Whitman was the other tenant of the duplex apartment, a pleasant gray-haired woman whose chief preoccupation seemed to be the deep brilliant border that edged her little lawn on three sides. The border was now bare drying earth, the flowers themselves a heap of ruffled and shriveling color piled up outside the gate.

To Tom, for just a flash, the child looking up at him seemed to have the wanton triumph of a small boy standing with his slingshot near a shattered greenhouse—and then Chloe was saying defensively, "The flowers, I don't know which ones, made Mother sneeze and her eyes puff up, so Mrs. Whitman *said* to."

Hester was tranquilly regretful. "It's too bad about Mrs. Whitman's garden, isn't it? I felt awful, telling her about the doctor's orders—you know, to sit out in the sun for a little while every day—but she understood perfectly; in fact, she couldn't have been nicer. I came right in and baked her a batch of brownies."

Tom, remembering the weeks of Mrs. Whitman's assiduous weeding, cultivating, watering, sent a look of wonderment at his wife's back. Did Hester possibly think that a confection hastily whipped up in the kitchen—? No, of course she didn't; she had simply made a small token apology in the only way she could on the spur of the moment.

. . . But, he thought later that night while Hester slept, her breath quiet and even, she had been mistaken in thinking that Mrs. Whitman had "understood perfectly." That brutal heap of uprooted flowers, piled there openly by someone who loved them, was a statement of cold anger only emphasized by the invitation to the complainant's child to come and help with the carnage.

It was too bad in every sense, because Tom had hoped that Hester, so used to the daily companionship of other women, would start making friends in the neighborhood. His last waking reflection, still troubled, was that it might not be a bad idea to have Chloe, an avid car

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

washer, surprise Mrs. Whitman tomorrow or the next day by scrubbing her little cherry-red Volkswagen . . .

When Tom hinted worriedly to Hester about her possible loneliness, she denied it cheerfully. Her friends back East had been marvelous, and of course she missed them; but it was a positive luxury now to be able to do, unassisted, so many of the domestic things they had helped her with before. And of course—here she glanced around vaguely—she had Chloe for company.

But this, although it was not borne in on Tom immediately, was less and less the case . . .

The doctor was enormously pleased with Hester's progress, and she apparently took this as *carte blanche* because, by the time August had arrived, she was seldom still. Wearing Bermuda shorts, a thing she could not have done before because of the sticklike thinness of her legs, Hester took down and washed and rehung the venetian blinds; she carried out the scatter rugs to air. She also washed the windows, inside and out, scoured the oven, and began on the paintwork. If the apartment did not have the warm glow of the little house back East, it was at least very shiny.

Tom did not find it surprising, in view of Hester's steady gain, that Chloe had stopped keeping her diary; the last entry, for July 26th, was: "Steak, asparagis, mashed potatoes, vinila ice cream." He now had a small but annoying problem of his own: his sinuses had evidently become affected by the dry heat and at night, frequently, his forehead felt bound with iron. Hester's wonder-working nose drops, trickling bitterly down the back of his throat no matter how carefully he administered them, did not seem to help.

One night in mid-August, when he was cautiously congratulating himself on feeling fine, the tense pain came creeping back at the dinner table. Maybe a storm approaching, thought Tom; the sky looked thunderous and he had sensed electricity in the air ever since his return home from work. Well, they needed the rain—

"Eat your dinner!" said Hester in a voice that made Tom's fork jump in his hand. He glanced at her astoundedly—she had delivered the words like a cuff; but her attention was on Chloe, fair head bent, hands in her lap although they were having roast chicken, which she loved.

"Eat your dinner," repeated Hester more quietly and perhaps more dangerously. The storm which Tom had thought so innocently to be in the upper elements was closer, and he was so bewildered that he could only stare.

"I'm not hungry," said Chloe, the corners of her mouth beginning to waver helplessly. "I feel sick."

"Very well, then, you're excused,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said Hester evenly, and held herself remorselessly still and attentive while the child pushed back her chair, dropped her napkin, bumped her head on the table in the course of retrieving it, and then fled.

The door of her bedroom closed. Hester sprinkled salt and said calmly to Tom, "You look tired—was it a rough day?"

"Not bad," said Tom distractedly, putting down his own napkin and starting to rise. This was like a dream, in which elk went by in Easter bonnets and nobody thought it odd at all. "I'll go see what's the matter with—"

"Chloe is sulking because that foolish horse is gone," said Hester casually, and proceeded to tell him.

Tom had been aware of the affection between Chloe and the horse in the next field, and knew that the landlord let her mount occasionally and go for blissful ambles. As the horse was trained to halt the instant the weight in the saddle began to slip, it had seemed the most innocent of diversions. What Tom hadn't known—"I hate being such a constant nuisance to everybody"—was that Hester reacted badly to close contact with horses, and had begun to wheeze when Chloe came in from her rides.

She had, she said, forbidden Chloe to ride the horse, but at every opportunity the child had slipped over to the fence to caress the white-blazed face and brush the dark-gold mane dedicatedly. "—which came to pretty much the same thing," said Hester ruefully. "Mr. Lacey saw the problem right away, and said his son would be delighted to keep the horse at his place—it doesn't get enough exercise here anyway. Somehow, I expected Chloe to understand."

Or understand *perfectly,* like Mrs. Whitman with her flowers? Tom was shocked at this disloyal thought—they were here after all for Hester's health, and allergies were not to be played around with; but his forehead now felt sealed with pain. When he had eaten what he could of his dinner he picked up Chloe's untouched plate. "I think I'll bring this in to her now."

Hester's eyebrows rose, but all she said was, "If you think it's wise."

Chloe got over the horse, as Hester had sensibly predicted she would, and settled herself to the serious business of making friends in the neighborhood before the opening of school. This was not the automatic process of a child who had been constantly with other children, but an almost adult approach. As a result, she was home at noontime for a sandwich and milk, usually with a standoffish and staring little girl in tow.

Tom took his headaches to a doctor, was informed that his sinuses were as clear as a bell, and, although he kept it from Hester so that she would not worry, he began to take

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the tranquilizers the doctor prescribed.

Hester bloomed, even in the scorching heat. Her delicate tan had turned brown, and she was strong and rangy. She was busy making new curtains, busy registering Chloe for school, busy waxing the floors, relining the kitchen shelves, taking down and washing the ceiling light fixtures. She had grown used to, as Tom and Chloe had, her own newly nasal voice, although she would say irritably now and then, "I sound exactly like a duck."

Although it was only the end of August, the annual weather prophets were out in force. Tom and Hester, who could seldom find any news of Massachusetts in the local papers, nevertheless learned with guilty pleasure that an early and very hard winter was predicted for the East.

(But how warm and snug the little house in Massachusetts had been, with Hester on the couch in a pretty housecoat, Chloe bustling importantly in the kitchen, Tom peacefully reading the evening paper while the wind raged outside and the fire simmered and snapped on the hearth. Lamplight over everything, and a perfect security that had nothing to do with locks or bolts or storm windows.)

We are all happy, Tom informed himself, swallowing his white pill; the pity is that we didn't do this sooner.

School was to begin on August 29th. On the 27th, coming home with the commissioned notebooks and pencils and lunch box, Tom saw that Chloe had washed Mrs. Whitman's car again; the little red Volkswagen was dripping and flashing in the sun. And there was, mystifyingly, a cat fight in progress somewhere close by. Of all the things Hester couldn't have near her . . . How could a cat have gotten—?

He was alarmedly out of his car and inside the gate when the menacing shrills became distinguishable words instead of rising and falling howls. "—*so* nice of you to be sweet and considerate with the neighbors," shrieked the cat voice. "Never mind me, *I* don't count. But how many times have I told you about those filthy sneakers? And look at those shorts. You've been in the wading pool with those dreadful children, haven't you, Miss? I said, *Haven't you, Miss?*"

There was an odd sound then, not a response from Chloe but still a sound. Tom's stupefied eye caught a lunge past the screen door; his ear heard a panting, "There you stay!" and then a sharp bang.

The bang seemed to split the frontal bones of his head. Standing paralyzed on the path, at once incredulous and certain, he realized that this strident plunging creature in Bermuda shorts was his gentle luminous Hester, this contemptible "Miss" his skinny worshipful child.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He made himself go in. Hester was washing lettuce at the sink, her hands unsteady. There was no sign of Chloe. Tom said with a weariness he did not know he had accumulated, "What's the matter?" and Hester whirled.

"You'll have to talk to that child, Tom." *That child.* "She's always been spoiled, but now she's completely out of hand."

Spoiled. The nine-year-old who by now was an expert at doing dishes, ironing her own clothes, compiling bizarrely spelled shopping lists, and trudging faithfully around supermarkets . . . "What's she done?"

"Disobeyed me, deliberately. There are some very dubious-looking children up the street who have a wading pool, and I told Chloe that she was not to go there."

"Hester, this was a hot afternoon —"

"That's not the point. The point is that I told her not to," said Hester, spacing the last five words almost softly. By contrast, pots and their lids leaped into a clattering frenzy under her hands when she turned to the stove, and the glance she flung at Tom was razorish with —was it anger? Or some perverse excitement? Something, at any rate, that changed her into the kind of woman you saw dragging a small sobbing child ruthlessly by the hand, jerking all the harder when the child stumbled.

"I think we'd better get it clear here and now that I won't stand for this kind of behavior," the stranger at the stove was saying in her nasal and driving voice. "If you don't punish her, I will."

There were still a few shafts of late sunlight in Chloe's prim little room. She lay on her bed with her back to the door, not so much crying as shuddering, taking convulsive breaths which she buried fiercely in the pillow. Tom sat down on the bed and turned her gently to face him; he had to glance away quickly for a moment, feeling his own throat prickle at the dull red mark on her cheek.

That was the curious sound he had heard. From outside.

He had meant to tell Chloe quietly and reasonably that she could not disobey her mother, making it—because he realized suddenly that in the past week or so they had understood each other very well indeed—more of a father-to-daughter warning than a parental thunderbolt. But the reasonable words would not come; so he simply sat there, stroking the tumbled hair away from her forehead and talking about small detached things until she was able to heave a very deep breath with only the barest tremor.

She said, "Mother doesn't like being better, does she."

It was neither a question nor an accusation. It was an observation delivered with adult despair, and it encompassed much more than a hard humiliating slap. It took in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

last—three weeks, four? Tom could not be sure, in his shock at the nakedness of the words, any more than a man could be sure when, after living with an obscure pain that frightened him, he was asked by the doctor who put an exact finger on the source, "How long have you had this?"

He didn't—at the moment he couldn't—answer his child. He gave her forehead a final pat and walked to the window, where he gazed out blindly into the coming dusk.

Was it possible? Could Hester have acquired the last allergy of all, and be no more able to assimilate health than cat dander? Were there personalities who could not thrive, or thrive sanely, on physical well-being?

It was appalling to think so, but it was less spine-touching than the notion that this personality had dwelt inside Hester all along, and had simply never been well enough to come out before. How, in that case, it must have raged and struggled against the tranquillity and binding love in the little Massachusetts house . . .

Tom's shoulder muscles gave a quick cold ripple as he shook that off and went back to the first possibility. If their past happiness even in the face of illness had been so present in his mind, how much more so must it have been in Hester's? Certainly she had never consciously liked being a semi-invalid, but—the stream of solicitous friends dropping in, the cheerful little gifts of a crocheted bed jacket or a homemade coffee cake, the momentous gaining or losing of half a pound—and, yes, the attention.

Chloe had been her devoted shadow, but now, like any other healthy nine-year-old, Chloe roamed and played. And Hester had flung herself into frenetic activity, perhaps battling unconsciously with this terrible new allergy, before it began to win.

Tom had never asked, but he was coldly sure now that Chloe had admired and helped in Mrs. Whitman's garden. She had worshipped the friendly horse. She had set about making friends, to prepare herself for entering a strange school, and been invited to wade in a back-yard pool. The sacrifices to Hester had not been voluntary, or even appeasing, but they had certainly been made.

And yet . . . Hester will be as upset as I am, said Tom to himself.

Hester was not. Told falsely that Chloe was asleep, she said with an edge, "Funny how easily she falls asleep on nights when we have meat loaf," and attacked her own dinner with zest. It was very good meat loaf, and a few small bites of it settled in Tom's stomach like the best cement; Chloe's vacant place at the table, and the silence from her room, pressed upward against his ribs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Although Hester said nothing further about punishing Chloe, her face was curiously set, and when she asked Tom after the dishes were done, "Aren't you going to take your usual walk?" he manufactured a yawn and said, "Too tired."

He was, of course, not worried about any small personal action which might be taken in his absence down the long driveway. Certainly not. He was simply—tired.

He lay awake all night—not like someone with merely restless intervals, but literally all night. Once he got up quietly to look in at and cover Chloe; for the rest, he listened to his wife's deep untroubled breathing and studied a number of scenes which unwound like tape against the black ceiling.

In the morning he said cheerfully to Chloe, "Come on, I'll buy you a new dress for school," and to Hester, "They're having some kind of executive session at the office and I don't have to be in until eleven."

Surely Hester did not look somehow impotent as they left?

"Daddy," said Chloe hesitantly in the car—she was pleating the fabric of her skirt incessantly, a new and disturbing habit—"won't Mother be mad because she didn't come too?"

"She's got a million things to do," Tom said airily, and bore her off to the back-to-school department of a downtown store. He found a reliable-looking saleswoman to whom he gave vague suggestions about a dress, and told Chloe firmly to wait for him there.

There were public phone booths on the first floor, and from one of these Tom sent himself an urgent telegram signed with the name of his former employer in Massachusetts; he would be home to open it when it arrived, so that no question would be raised as to its place of origin. To make doubly sure, he instructed the operator to have the message delivered; there would be no one at that telephone all day, he said.

From the phone booth, because it was somehow of immense importance that Chloe should not even uncomprehendingly hear what he was going to say, he proceeded to the railroad station. Judging by a few banners strung about it was "Sunshine Appreciation Week," which was just chasing out "Eat More Cottage Cheese Week." When he asked the pretty clerk at a ticket window for two and a half fares to Falcon, Massachusetts, she said with arch reproachfulness, "Oh, surely that's round trip, sir?"

The buoyancy assumed for Chloe's sake had left him. Perhaps as a result of his sleepless night his ears resounded queerly with the doctor's voice: "To put it baldly, I doubt very seriously . . ." and the prediction of the weather prophets.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was nothing momentous in the glance he sent through the ticket window. To the pretty clerk, who remembered him for approximately a minute afterward, he was just an ordinary, pleasant-looking man; fair, thirty-fivish, rather tired, with lines around his mouth. There was certainly no special inflection in his voice when he said, as though arousing himself from a dream, "No—that will be one way."

EDITORS' NOTE: *In addition to the killer and the victim, there are three major factors in every murder situation: motive, opportunity, and means. In most cases, real or fictional, the means is "ordinary"—gun, knife, bludgeon, poison, and so on. Now think of Ursula Curtiss' "Change of Climate" from the standpoint of means: to the best of our recollection, Ursula Curtiss has come up with a new means of murder—or, if it is not new, surely one of the most unusual on record . . .*

NEXT MONTH . . .

***BRAND-NEW*—the first short novel about Mom**
JAMES YAFFE's *Mom Remembers*

Christmas stories—
EDGAR WALLACE's *The Father Christmas Job*
ALICE SCANLAN REACH's *Father Crumlish Celebrates Christmas*

NEW stories—including
JULIAN SYMONS' *A Pearl Among Women*
STUART CLOETE's *The Second Nail*
JOE GORES's *File #2. Stakeout on Page Street*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ANTHONY BOUCHER'S HONOR ROLL

of Distinguished New Mystery Stories published in American magazines

EQMM's percentages

1962	43.6%
1963	50.8%
1964	44.1%
1965	55.0%
1966	50.0%

Nearly one-half of the distinguished new mystery stories published in all American magazines in the last 5 years (252 stories out of 516) appeared first in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine;* and these 252 Honor Roll stories did not include the superior reprints, both short stories and short novels, which are offered by *EQMM* each month.

"*Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* is the best crime-fiction periodical ever published."

Anthony Boucher
The New York Times Book Review,
October 30, 1966

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HOW IT WAS BORN . . .

a new procedural series

In May 1966 Joe Gores, at the urging of Anthony Boucher, gave a speech at the monthly meeting of the California Chapter of MWA (Mystery Writers of America). Being a full-time private eye at the time, Mr. Gores naturally chose his work as the subject matter of his talk, detailing through anecdotes the factual techniques of day-to-day skiptracing. After the speech, Anthony Boucher suggested to Mr. Gores that he write a series of procedural stories, and when Mr. Gores relayed the suggestion to EQMM we promptly encouraged him to go ahead—to create a fictional agency and true-to-life investigators.

Early in 1967 Mr. Gores sent us the first of his private-eye procedurals—about Daniel Kearny Associates, with home office in San Francisco. The scope of the agency's activities had been broadened beyond "repos" (repossessions—the recovery of a chattel, usually an automobile, when payments are in arrears). As Kearny, the tough head of the agency, says: "We're hired to investigate people who have defaulted, defrauded, or embezzled—money or goods—to find them if they've skipped out, and to return the property to the legal owner." Kearny trains his agents to be hard—not Spillane-hard, with spilled blood and shattered bones, but with a tough philosophy of life—the tough approach of, say, The Old Man in the Continental Op series by Dashiell Hammett.

Mr. Gores's first procedural fuses fact and fancy: it might be called semidocumentary—a case history written as fiction. Its people are realistic, the events are based on factual procedures, and although told in short-story form, it has the hard, compelling smack of raw truth . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FILE #1: *The Mayfield Case*

by JOE GORES

Tuesday, May 23rd: 8:15 a.m.

LARRY BALLARD WAS HALFWAY TO the Daniel Kearny Associates office before he remembered to switch on his radio. After a whine and a blast of static, O'Bannon's voice came on loudly in mid-transmission.

". . . Bay Bridge yet, Oakland 3?"

"Coming up to the toll plaza now. The subject is three cars ahead of me. I'll need a front tail once he's off the bridge; over."

"Stand by. KDM 366 Control calling any San Francisco unit."

Ballard unclipped his mike and pressed the red TRANSMIT button. "This is SF 6. My location is Oak and Buchanan, moving east, over."

"Oakland 3 is tailing a red Comet convertible across Bay Bridge, license Charlie, X-Ray, Kenneth, 8-8-1. The legal owner, California Citizens Bank on Polk Street, wants *car only*—contract outlawed."

Oakland 3 cut in: "Wait by the Ninth and Bryant off-ramp, SF 6."

"Control standing by," said O'Bannon. "KDM 366 clear."

O'Bannon set down the hand mike on Giselle Marc's desk, leaving it flipped to MONITOR. He was a wiry red-haired man about 40, with twinkling blue eyes, freckles, and a hard-bitten drinker's face.

"Who's SF 6? The new kid?"

"Right. Larry Ballard. With us a month yesterday." Giselle was a tall lean blonde who had started with DKA as a part-time file girl while in college; after graduation two years before, she had taken over the Cal-Cit Bank desk. "He's a green pea but he's eager and maybe—just maybe—he can think. Kathy's putting him on his own this week."

O'Bannon grunted. "The Great White Father around?"

"Down in his cubbyhole—in a vile mood."

O'Bannon grimaced and laid his expense-account itemization on her desk with great reverence. Giselle regarded it without enthusiasm.

"Why don't you do your own dirty work, O'B?" she demanded.

Same day: 10:00 a.m.

Ballard was lanky, well-knit, in his early twenties, with blue eyes already hardened by his month with DKA. He was stopped, by Dan Kearny himself, at the top of the narrow stairs leading to the second floor of the old Victorian building that housed the company offices.

"That Comet in the barn?"

"Yes, sir," said Ballard.

"Terrif. Any static?" Kearny was compact and powerful, with a square pugnacious face, massive jaw, and cold gray eyes which invariably regarded the world

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through a wisp of cigarette smoke.

"I front-tailed him from the freeway. When he parked on Howard Street, Oakland 3 and I just wired up the Comet and drove it away."

Kearny clapped Ballard's shoulder and went on. Ballard entered the front office, which overlooked Golden Gate Avenue through unwashed bay windows. Three assignments were in his basket on the desk of Jane Goldson, the phone receptionist with the Liverpool accent: through her were channeled all assignments, memos, and field reports.

Carrying the case sheets, Ballard descended to the garage under the building. Along the right wall were banks of lockers for personal property; along the left, small partitioned offices used by the seven San Francisco field men. He paused to review his new cases before leaving.

The most puzzling one involved a new Continental, financed through Cal-Cit Bank, which had been purchased by a Jocelyn Mayfield, age 23. She and her roommate, Victoria Goodrich, lived at 31 Edith Alley and were case workers for San Francisco Social Services. What startled Ballard was the size of the delinquent payments—$198.67 each—and the contract balance of over $7000. On a welfare worker's salary? Even though her parents lived in the exclusive St. Francis Woods area, they were not cosigners on the contract.

From his small soundproofed office at the rear of the garage Dan Kearny watched Ballard leave. Kearny had been in the game for over half of his 43 years, and still hadn't figured out the qualities which made a good investigator; only time would tell if Ballard had them. Kearny jabbed an intercom button with a blunt finger.

"Giselle? Send O'Bannon down here, will you?"

He lit a Lucky, leaned back to blow smoke at the ceiling. O'B had come with him six years before, when Kearny had resigned from Walter's Auto Detectives to start DKA with one car and this old Victorian building which had been a bawdy house in the '90s; and reviewing O'B's expense accounts still furnished Kearny with his chief catharsis.

He smeared out the cigarette; through the one-way glass he could see O'Bannon approaching the office, whistling, his hands in pockets, his blue eyes innocent of guile. When he came in, Kearny shook out a cigarette for himself and offered the pack. "How's Bella, O'B?"

"She asks when you're bringing the kids for *cioppino* again."

Kearny indicated the littered desk. "I'm two weeks behind in my billing. Oh . . . this *expense* account, O'B." Without warning his fist smashed down in sudden fury. *"Dammit, if you think . . ."*

O'Bannon remained strangely tranquil during the storm. When Kearny finally ran down, the red-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

headed man cleared his throat and spoke.

"Giants leading three-two, bottom of the third. Marichal—"

"What do you mean?" Kearny looked stunned. "What the—"

O'Bannon fished a tiny transistor radio from his pocket, then apologetically removed miniature speakers from both his ears. Kearny gaped.

"You mean—while I—you were *listening to the ball game?*"

O'Bannon nodded dolorously. Speechless with rage, Kearny jerked out the expense-account checkbook; but then his shoulders began shaking with silent laughter.

Same day: 9:30 p.m.

Larry Ballard parked on upper Grant; above him, on Telegraph Hill, loomed the concrete cone of Coit Tower, like a giant artillery piece about to be fired. Edith Alley ran half a block downhill toward Stockton; Jocelyn Mayfield and her roommate, Victoria Goodrich, had the lower apartment in a two-story frame building.

The girl who answered the bell wore jeans and sweatshirt over a chunky figure; her short hair was tinted almost white. Wide cheekbones gave her a Slavic look.

"Is Jocelyn here?" Ballard asked.

"Are you a friend of hers?" Her voice was harshly attractive.

Ballard took a flier. "I was in one of her Sociology classes."

"At Stanford?" She stepped back. "Sorry if I sounded antisocial. Sometimes male clients get ideas, y'know?"

He followed her into the apartment. "You must be Vikki—Josie has mentioned you. You don't act like a social worker."

" 'Say something to me in psychology'? Actually, I was a waitress down in North Beach before I started with Social Services."

There were cheap shades at the windows of the rather barren living room, a grass mat on the floor, a wicker chair and a couch, and an ugly black coffee table. The walls were a depressing brown. It was not a room in keeping with monthly automobile payments of $200.

"We're going to repaint eventually," Vikki said. "I guess."

Ballard nodded. "Has Josie mentioned selling the Continental?"

"The Continental?" She frowned. "That belongs to Hank—*we* both use my Triumph. I don't think he wants to sell it; he just got it."

"Hank, huh? Say, what's his name and address? I can—"

Just then a key grated in the front door. Damn! Two minutes more would have done it. Now the subject was in the room, talking breathlessly. "Did Hank call? He wasn't at his apartment, and—"

"Here's an old friend of yours," Vikki cut in brightly.

Ballard was staring. Jocelyn Mayfield was the loveliest girl he had ever seen, her fawnlike beauty ac-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cented by shimmering jet hair. Her mouth was small but full-lipped, her brows slightly heavy for a girl, her brown liquid eyes full-lashed. She had one of those supple patrician figures maintained by tennis on chilly mornings.

"Old friend?" Her voice was low. "But I don't even know him!"

That tore it. Ballard blurted, "I'm —uh—representing California Citizens Bank. We've been employed to investigate your six-hundred dollar delinquency on the 1967 Continental. We—"

"You dirty—" The rest of Vikki's remark was not that of a welfare worker. "I bet you practice lying to yourself in front of a mirror. I bet —"

"Vikki, hush." Jocelyn was blushing, deeply embarrassed. Vikki stopped and her eyes popped open wide.

"You mean you *did* make the down payment on that car? It's registered in *your* name? You fool! He couldn't make a monthly payment on a free lunch, and you—" She stopped, turned on Ballard. "Okay, buster. Out."

"Vikki, please." Then Jocelyn said to Ballard, "I thought—I had no idea the payments—By Friday I can have all the money."

"I said *out,* buster," Vikki snapped. "You heard her—you'll get your pound of flesh. And that's *all* you'll get—unless I tear Josie's dress and run out into that alley yelling rape."

Ballard retreated; he had no experience in handling a Vikki Goodrich. And there was something about Jocelyn Mayfield—private stock, O'Bannon would have called her. She'd been so obviously let down by this Hank character; and she *had* promised to pay by Friday.

Monday, May 29th: 3:30 p.m.

Jane Goldson winked and pointed toward the Office Manager's half-closed door. "She's in a proper pet, she is, Larry."

He went in. Kathy Onoda waved him to a chair without removing the phone from her ear. She was an angular girl in her late twenties, with classical Japanese features. Speaking into the phone her voice was hesitant, nearly unintelligible with sibilants.

"I jus' rittre Joponee girr in your country verry littre time." She winked at Ballard. "So sorry too, preese. I roose job I . . . ah . . . ah so. Sank you verry much. Buddha shower bressings."

She hung up and exclaimed jubilantly, "Why do those stupid s.o.b.'s always fall for that phony Buddha-head accent?" All trace of it had disappeared. "You, hotshot, you sleeping with this Mayfield chick? One report, dated last Tuesday, car in hands of a third party, three payments down—and you take a promise. Which isn't kept."

"Well, you see, Kathy, I thought —"

"You want me to come along and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hold your hand?" Her black eyes glittered and her lips thinned with scorn. "Go to Welfare and hint that she's sleeping around; tell her mother that our investigation is going to hit the society pages; get a line on this Hank no-goodnik." She jabbed a finger at him. "Go gettem bears!"

Ballard fled, slightly dazed as always after a session with Kathy. Driving toward Twin Peaks, he wondered why Jocelyn had broken her promise. Just another deadbeat? He hated to believe that, apart from the Mayfield case he was doing a good job. He still carried a light case load, but he knew that eventually he would be responsible for as many as 75 files simultaneously, with reports due every three days on each of them except skips, holds, and contingents.

The Mayfield home was on Darien Way in St. Francis Woods; it was a huge pseudo-colonial with square columns and a closely trimmed lawn like a gigantic golf green. Inside the double garage was a new Mercedes. A maid with iron-grey hair took his card, returned with Jocelyn's mother—an erect, pleasant-faced woman in her fifties.

"I'm afraid I'm not familiar with Daniel Kearny Associates."

"We represent California Citizens Bank," said Ballard. "We've been engaged to investigate certain aspects of your daughter's finances."

"Jocelyn's finances?" Her eyes were lighter than her daughter's, with none of their melting quality. "Whatever in the world for?"

"She's six hundred dollars delinquent on a 1967 Continental."

"Indeed?" Her voice was frigid. "Perhaps you had better come in."

The living room had a red brick fireplace and was made strangely tranquil by the measured ticking of an old-fashioned grandfather's clock. There was a grand piano and a magnificent Oriental rug.

"Now. Why would my daughter supposedly do such a thing?"

"She bought it for a"—his voice gave the word emphasis—"man."

She stiffened. "You cannot be intimating that my daughter's personal life is anything but exemplary! When Mr. Mayfield hears this—this infamous gossip, he—He is most important in local financial circles."

"So is California Citizens Bank."

"Oh!" She stood up abruptly. "I suggest you leave this house."

Driving back, Ballard knew he had made the right move to bring parental pressure on Jocelyn Mayfield, but the knowledge gave him scant pleasure. There had been a framed picture of her on the piano; somehow his own thoughts, coupled with the picture, had made his memory of their brief meeting sharper, almost poignant.

Same day: 5:15 p.m.

Dan Kearny lit a Lucky. "I think you know why I had you come back in, Ballard. The Mayfield case. Are you *proud* of that file?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No, sir." He tried to meet Kearny's gaze. "But I think she broke her promise to pay because this deadbeat talked her into it."

"You took a *week* to find that out?" Kearny demanded. "Giselle found out that the subject walked off her job at Welfare last Friday night—took an indefinite leave without bothering to leave any forwarding address."

Kearny paused to form a smoke ring. He could blast this kid right out of the tank, but he didn't want to do that. "I started in this game in high school, Ballard, during the Depression. Night-hawking cars for Old Man Walters down in L.A. at five bucks per repo—cover your own expenses, investigate on your own time. Some of those Oakies would have made you weep, but I couldn't *afford* to feel sorry for them. This Mayfield dame's in a mess. Is that *our* fault? Or the *bank's?*"

"No, sir. But there are special circumstances—"

"Circumstances be *damned!* We're hired to investigate people who have defaulted, defrauded, or embezzled—money or goods—to find them if they've skipped out, and to return the property to the legal owner. Mayfield's contract is *three months* delinquent and *you* spin your wheels for a whole week. Right now the bank is looking at a seven-thousand dollar loss." He ground out his cigarette and stood up. "Let's take a ride."

Later, ringing the bell at 31 Edith Alley, Ballard warned, "This Victoria Goodrich is tough. I know she won't tell us anything."

Vikki opened the door and glared at him. "*You* again?"

Kearny moved past Ballard so smoothly that the girl had to step back to avoid being walked on, and they were inside. "My name is Turk," he said. "I'm with the legal department of the bank."

She had recovered. "You should be *ashamed,* hiring this person to stir up trouble for Josie with her folks. Okay, so she's two lousy payments behind. I'll make one of them now, and next week she can—"

"*Three* payments. And since the vehicle is in the hands of a third party, the contract is void." He shot a single encompassing look around the living room, then brought his cold gray eyes back to her face. "We know Miss Mayfield has moved out. Where is she living now?"

"I don't know." She met his gaze stubbornly.

Kearny nodded. "Fraudulent contract; flight to avoid prosecution. We'll get a grand-theft warrant for her seven-thousand dollar embezzle—"

"Good God!" Vikki's face crumpled with dismay. "Really, I don't know Hank's addr—I mean I don't know where she's gone. I—" Under his unwinking stare, tears suddenly came into her voice. "His wife's on welfare; he's no damn good. Once

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when he'd been drinking he—he put his hands on me. I guess she's with him, but I don't know where."

"Then what's Hank's last name?"

She sank down on the couch with her face in her hands and merely shook her head. Ignoring her, Kearny turned to Ballard. "Sweet kid, this Mayfield. She *steals* the woman's husband, then a car, then—"

"No!" Vikki was sobbing openly. "It isn't like that! They were separated—"

Kearny's voice lashed out. *"What's his last name?"*

"I won't—"

"Hank *what?"*

"You've no right to—"

"—to throw your trashy roommate in jail? We can and we *will."*

She raised a tear-ravaged face. "If you find the car will Josie stay out of prison?"

"I can't make promises of immunity on behalf of the bank."

"His name is Stuber. Harold Stuber." She wailed suddenly to Ballard. "Make him stop! I've told everything I know—everything."

Kearny grunted. "You've been most helpful," he said, then strode out. Ballard took a hesitant step toward the hunched, sobbing girl, hesitated, and then ran after Kearny.

"Why did you do that to her?" he raged. "Now she's crying—"

"And we've got the information we came after," Kearny said.

"But you said to her—"

"But, *hell."* He called Control on the radio. When Giselle answered—he said, "Mayfield unit reportedly in the hands of a Harold Stuber—S-t-u-b-e-r. Checked him through the Polk Directory." He lit a cigarette and puffed placidly at it, the mike lying in his lap.

"The only listing under Harold Stuber shows a residence at 1597 Eighteenth Street; employment, bartender; wife, Edith."

"Thanks, Giselle. SF 6 clear."

"KDM 366 Control clear."

Driving out to Eighteenth Street, Ballard was glad it had been Vikki, not Jocelyn Mayfield, who had been put through the meat grinder. Vikki wasn't soft, yet Kearny had reduced her to tears in just a few vicious minutes.

The address on Eighteenth Street was a dirty, weathered stucco building above the heavy industrial area fringing Potrero Hill. It was a neighborhood losing its identity in its battle against the wrecker's ball. Inside the apartment house, the first-floor hall wore an ancient threadbare carpet with a design like spilled animal intestines.

"Some of this rubbed off on your true love," remarked Kearny.

Ballard gritted his teeth. Their knock was answered by a man two inches over six feet, wide as the doorway. His rolled-up sleeves showed hairy, muscle-knotted arms; his eyes were red-rimmed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and he carried a glass of whiskey. He looked as predictable as a runaway truck.

Kearny was unimpressed. "Harold Stuber?"

"He don't live here no more." The door began to close.

"How about Edith Stuber?"

The hand on the door hesitated. "Who's askin'?"

"Welfare." When Kearny went forward the huge man wavered, lost his inner battle, and stepped back. The apartment smelled of chili and unwashed diapers; somewhere in one of the rooms a baby was screaming.

"Edie," yelled the big man, "coupla guys from Welfare."

She was a boldly handsome woman in her thirties, with dark hair and flashing black eyes. Under a black sweater and black slacks her body was full-breasted, wide-hipped, heavily sensual.

"Welfare?" Her voice became a whine. "D'ya have my check?"

"Your *check?*" Kearny's eyes flicked to the big man with simulated contempt. He whirled to Ballard. "Johnson, note that the recipient is living common-law with a Caucasian male, height six-two, weight two-twenty, estimated age thirty-nine. Recipient should—"

"Hey!" yelled the woman, turning furiously on the big man, "if I lose my welfare check—"

Kearny cut in brusquely, "We're only interested in your legal spouse, Mrs. Stuber."

Her yells stopped like a knife slash. "You come about Hank? He ain't lived here in five months. When he abandoned me an' the kid—"

"But the Bureau knows he gets in touch with you."

"You could call it that." She gave a coarse laugh. "Last Wednesday he come over in a big Continental, woke us—woke *me* up an' made a row 'bout Mr. Kleist here sleebein' my acquaintance. Then the p'lice come an' Hank, he slugged one of 'em. So they took him off."

Kearny said sharply, "What about the Continental?"

"It set here to the weekend, then it was gone."

"What's your husband's current residence address?"

She waved a vague arm. "He never said." Her eyes widened. "He give me a phone number, but I never did call it; knew it wouldn't do no good." Behind her the baby began crying; the big man went away. Her eyes were round with the effort of remembering. "Yeah. 860-4645.

Back in the agency car, Kearny lit a cigarette. "If it's any consolation, there's the reason for her broken promise. He gets busted Wednesday night, gets word to Mayfield Thursday, on Friday she quits her job. Saturday she sees him at the county jail, finds out where he left the car, drops it into dead storage somewhere near his apartment, and holes up there to wait

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

until he gets out. Find her, you find the car."

"Can't we trace the phone number this one gave us?"

Kearny gestured impatiently. "That'll just be some gin mill."

The next day the Mayfield folder went into the SKIP tub and a request went to the client for a copy of the subject's credit application. Skiptracing began on the case. The phone number proved to be that of a tough Valencia Street bar. DKA's Peninsula agent found that Stuber had drawn a thirty-to-ninety-day rap in the county jail, the heavy sentence resulting from a prior arrest on the same charge. Stuber said he still lived at Eighteenth Street and denied knowing the subject. A stakeout of the jail's parking lot during visiting hours was negative.

Police contacts reported that the Continental had not been impounded, nor was it picking up parking tags anywhere in San Francisco. Stuber had no current utilities service, no phone listing. The time involved in checking dead-storage garages would have been excessive. By phone Giselle covered Welfare, neighbors around the Edith Alley and Eighteenth Street addresses, the subject's former contacts at Stanford, Bartender's Local Number 41, all the references on the credit application. Ballard supplemented with field contact of postmen, gas station attendants, newsboys, and small store owners.

None of it did any good.

Thursday, June 9th: 7:15 p.m.

Ballard was typing reports at home when his phone rang. He had worked thirteen cases that day, including two skips besides Mayfield; it took him a few moments to realize that it was her voice.

"What have I done to make you hate me so?" she asked.

"I'm all for you personally, Josie, but I've got a job to do. Anyway, if I let up it just would mean that someone else would keep looking."

"I love him." She said it without emotion—a fact by which she lived. "I love him and he said he would leave me if I let them take his car while he's—away. I couldn't stand that. It's the first thing of beauty he's ever possessed, and he can't give it up."

Ballard was swept by a sudden wave of sympathy, almost of desire for her; he could picture her, wearing something soft, probably cashmere, her face serious, her mouth a pink bud. How could Stuber have such a woman bestowed on him, yet keep thinking of a damned automobile? How could he make Jocelyn see Stuber as he really was?

"Josie, the bank objects so strongly to Stuber that they've declared the contract void; as long as he had possession, they'd hold the account in jeopardy. Surrender it. Get him something you can afford."

"I couldn't do that," she said gravely, and hung up.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ballard got a beer from the refrigerator and sat down at the kitchen table to drink it. After only one meeting and a single phone conversation, was he falling for Jocelyn Mayfield? He felt a deep physical attraction, sure; but it wasn't unsatisfied desire which was oppressing him now. It was the knowledge that he was going to keep looking for the car, that there was no way to close the case without Jocelyn being badly hurt emotionally.

Friday, June 17: 10:15 a.m.

"If I see her mother once more, she'll call the cops," Ballard objected. "Stuber gets out June twenty-ninth. We could tail him—"

"The bank's deadline is next *Tuesday*—the twenty-first," said Kearny. "Then their dealer recourse expires and they have to *eat* their loss—whatever it is. Find the girl, Ballard, and get the car."

The intercom buzzed and Jane Goldson said, "Larry's got a funny sort of call on 1504, Mr. Kearney. She sounds drunk or something."

Kearny gestured and stayed on as Ballard picked up. The voice, which Ballard recognized as Jocelyn's, was overflowing with hysteria.

"I can't stand it any more and I want you to know you're to blame!" she cried. "My parentsh hate me—can't see Hank on weekends 'cause I know you'll be waiting, like vultures—sho— I did it." She gave a sleepy giggle. "I killed myself."

"You're a lively sounding corpse," said Kearny in a syrupy voice.

"I know who you are!" Surprisingly, she giggled again. "You made Vikki cry. Poor Vikki'll be all sad. I took all the pillsh."

Kearny, who appeared to have been doodling on a sheet of scratch paper, held up a crudely printed note: *Have Kathy trace call.* Ballard switched off, jabbed Kathy's intercom button. Please God, he thought, let her be all right. What had brought her to this extremity?

"I'll trace it," rapped Kathy "Keep that connection open."

He punched back into 1504. "— Ballard's shoul when I die—lose car, lose Hank, sho—" Her singsong trailed off with a tired sigh; there was a sudden heavy jar. After a moment a light tapping began, as if the receiver were swinging at the end of the cord and striking a table leg. They stared at one another across the empty line.

The intercom buzzed, making Ballard jump. Kathy said, "469 Eddy Street, Apartment 206, listed under Harold Stein—that'll be Stuber. The phone company'll get an ambulance and oxygen over there. Good hunting."

Ballard was already out of his chair. "It's a place on Eddy Street —we've got to get to her!"

As they rocketed up Franklin for the turn into Eddy Street, Ballard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said, "We shouldn't have hounded her that way. Do you think she'll be all right?"

"Depends on how many of what she took. That address—between Jones and Leavenworth in the Tenderloin—crummy neighborhood. The nearest dead-storage garage is around the corner on Jones Street. We can—hey! What the hell are you doing?"

Ballard had slammed the car to a stop in front of a rundown apartment building. "I've got to get to her!" he cried. He was halfway out the car door when Kearny's thick fingers closed around Ballard's tie and yanked him bodily back inside.

"You're a repo man, Ballard," he growled. "That might not mean much to you but it does to me, a hell of a lot. *First* we get the car." Ballard, suddenly desperate, drew back a threatening fist. Kearny's slaty eyes didn't flicker; he said, "Don't let my gray hairs make a coward of you, sonny."

Ballard slumped back on the seat. He nodded. "Okay. Drive on, damn you."

As they turned into Jones Street, a boxy white Public Health ambulance wheeled into Eddy and smoked to a stop on the wrong side of the street. At the garage half a block down, Kearny went in while Ballard waited in the car. Why had he almost slugged Kearny? For that matter, why had he backed down?

Kearny stuck his head in the window. "It's easy when you know where to look." He laid a hand on Ballard's arm. "On your way up there call Giselle and have her send me a Hold Harmless letter."

Ballard circled the block and parked behind the ambulance. On the second floor he saw three tenants gaping by the open door of Apartment 206. A uniformed cop put a hand on Ballard's chest.

"I was on the phone with her when she—fainted."

"Okay. The sergeant'll wanna talk with you anyway."

She was on the floor by the phone stand, her head back and her mouth open. Her skin was very pale; the beautifully luminous eyes were shut. A tracheal tube was down her throat so that she could breathe. The skirt had ridden high up one sprawled thigh, and Ballard pulled it down.

"Is she—will she—"

The intern was barely older than Ballard, but his hair already was thinning. "We'll give her oxygen in the ambulance." He opened his hand to display a bottle. "Unless she had something in here besides what's on the label, she should be okay."

Ballard glanced around the tiny two-roomer. There was a rumpled wall bed with a careless pile of paperbacks on the floor beside it; he could picture her cooped up there day after day, while her depression deepened. Above the flaked-silver radiator was a large brown water

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stain from the apartment upstairs; it was a room where dreams would die without a whimper.

Ballard backed off; instead of talking to the detective in charge he would call her folks so that their own doctor could be at the hospital to prevent it being listed as an attempted suicide.

That afternoon DKA closed the file on the Mayfield case. She was released from the hospital a few days later and returned to 31 Edith Alley. Without really knowing why, Ballard went over there one Tuesday evening to see her; she refused to come out of the bedroom, and he ended up in the living room, drinking tea with Vikki Goodrich.

"She's grateful for what you did, Larry. But, as far as anything further—" She paused delicately. "Hank Stuber will be out tomorrow." She paused again, her face suddenly troubled. "She's going to surprise him and pick him up in my Triumph; he doesn't know about the Continental. After that I guess she'll be—well, sort of busy."

Leaving the apartment, Ballard told himself that ended it. Yet he sat behind the wheel of his car for a long time without turning the ignition key. Damn it, that *didn't* end it! Too much raw emotion had been bared . . .

Thursday, June 30th: 8:15 a.m.

Each short journalistic phrase in the *Chronicle,* read over his forgotten restaurant eggs, deepened his sense of loss, his realization that something bright in his life had been permanently darkened.

Police officers, answering a call late last night to 31 Edith Alley, were greeted by Miss Victoria Goodrich, 24, a case worker with San Francisco Social Services. The hysterical Miss Goodrich said that her roommate, Jocelyn Mayfield, 23, and Harold P. Stuber, 38, had entered the apartment at eight p.m. Stuber had been drinking, she said; by ten p.m. he had become so abusive that he struck Miss Mayfield. According to Miss Goodrich he then departed, and Miss Mayfield locked herself in the bathroom.

At eleven p.m. Miss Goodrich called for police assistance. They broke down the locked door to find Miss Mayfield on the tile floor in a pool of blood. Both wrists had been slashed with a razor blade. The girl was D.O.A. at San Francisco General Hospital. Stuber, an unemployed bartender who was released only yesterday afternoon from the county jail, is being sought on an assault charge.

Ballard thought, I've never even seen the son-of-a— I could pass him on the street and not even know it. He felt a sudden revulsion, almost a nausea, at his own role in the destruction of Jocelyn Mayfield. Half an hour later he slammed the *Chronicle* down on Kearny's desk.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Stuber said he'd leave her if we took the Continental while he was in jail. He left her, all right."

Kearny looked at him blandly. "I've already seen it."

"If we hadn't taken the car—"

"—she would have killed herself next month or next year over some other deadbeat. She was an emotional loser, Ballard, a picker of wrong men." He paused, then continued drily, "It's the end of the month, Ballard. I'd like to review your case file."

Ballard dropped his briefcase on the littered desk. "You know what you can do with your case file, Kearny? You can take it and—"

Kearny listened without heat, then reached for his cigarettes. He lit one and sneered, through the new smoke, "What will you do now, Ballard—go home and cry into your pillow? She's going to be dead for a long long time."

Ballard stared at him, speechless, as if at a new species of animal—the square pugnacious face, the hard eyes which had seen too much, the heavy cleft chin, the nose slightly askew from some old argument which had gone beyond words. A long slow shudder ran through the younger man's frame. Work—that was Kearny's answer to everything. Work, while Jocelyn Mayfield lay with a morgue tag on her toe. Work, while scar tissue began its slow accretion over the wound.

All right, then—work. Very slowly he drew his assignments from the briefcase. "Let's get at it then," he said in a choked voice.

Dan Kearny nodded to himself. A girl had died; a man had had his first bitter taste of reality. And in the process DKA bought themselves an investigator. Maybe, with a few more rough edges knocked off, a damned good investigator.

INDEX TO VOLUME FIFTY—JULY-DECEMBER 1967

(Continued from page 162)

RICHTER, JOAN: Intruder in the Maize ..... July 133
SEARS, SUSAN: A Tale from the Chaucer ..... Sept. 123
SCHIER, NORMA: Double-Cross Word Puzzle ..... Dec. 44
SIMENON, GEORGES: Inspector Maigret Pursues ..... Oct. 99
SISK, FRANK: The Shadow of His Absence ..... Sept. 135
SKVORECKY, JOSEF: The Classic Semerak Case ..... Oct. 80
SPENCER, G. R.: The Polite Mr. Payne ..... Nov. 67
SYMONS, JULIAN: The Main Chance Aug. 118
TANIZAKI, JUNICHIRO: The Thief . Oct. 57
TELLEZ, HERNANDO: Enemy in His Hands ..... Oct. 95
TOLSTOY, LEO: The Man of God .. Oct. 73
TREAT, LAWRENCE: B As in Burglary ..... July 148
C As in Crime ..... Oct. 141
TYRE, NEDRA: In the Fiction Alcove ..... Sept. 153
WALLACE, SHIRLEY: The Tiger's Cub ..... July 99
WALSH, THOMAS: Poor Little Rich Kid ..... Nov. 99
WATSON, COLIN: The Infallible Clock ..... Nov. 43
WOOLRICH, CORNELL: Divorce—New York Style (Part Two) July 67

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INDEX TO VOLUME FIFTY—JULY-DECEMBER 1967

ALLINGHAM, MARGERY: The Chocolate Dog — Aug. 73
APRIL, STEVE: The Greatest Snatch in History — Sept. 55
ARMSTRONG, CHARLOTTE: The Second Commandment — July 6
More Than One Kind of Luck — Dec. 67
BANKIER, WILLIAM: Traffic Violation — Sept. 144
BENSEN, D. R.: Criminalimericks (E.Q.) — July 98
BENTLEY, PHYLLIS: Miss Phipps Goes to the Hairdresser — Dec. 119
BOLL, HEINRICH: Like a Bad Dream — Oct. 43
BOSKER, NOEL: Best Laid Schemes — Oct. 49
BOUCHER, ANTHONY: Best Mysteries of the Month — July - Dec.
BRAND, CHRISTIANNA: Here Lies . . . — Nov. 151
BREEN, JON L.: The Austin Murder Case — Dec. 6
BRISTOW, BOB: No Margin for Error — Aug. 131
BRITTAIN, WILLIAM: Mr. Strang Finds the Answers — Nov. 50
CARR, JOHN DICKSON: The Lion's Paw — July 51
The Man Who Saw the Invisible — Dec. 31
CARTER, YOUNGMAN: Alias Mr. Manchester — Sept. 115
CARY, JOYCE: The Sheep — Nov. 74
CHRISTIE, AGATHA: At the Stroke of Twelve — July 40
The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb — Dec. 99
CROSS, JAMES: The Man Who Called Himself James Cross — Nov. 113
CULLINGFORD, GUY: Something to Get at Quick — July 111
CURTIS, RICHARD: Odds Bodkins and the £1000 Wager — Nov. 62
CURTISS, URSULA: Change of Climate — Dec. 137
DEFORD, MIRIAM ALLEN: The Impersonation Murder Case — July 119
DOBLE, M. PATRICIA: The Quear Gest — Oct. 111
DOUGLAS, REV. NORMAN E.: The Washing Machine — Sept. 88
DUBIN, DENNIS M.: Elroy Quinn's Last Case — July 84
EDMONDSON, G. C.: A Question of Translation — Dec. 78
FISH, ROBERT L.: Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarters — Sept. 59
FREMLIN, CELIA: The Special Gift — July 102
GARVE, ANDREW: Line of Communication — Oct. 152
GILBERT, ANTHONY: The Intruders — Dec. 46
GILBERT, MICHAEL: The Terrorists — Oct. 6
GORDON, RICHARD M.: "O" Bits — Oct. 140
GORDONS, THE: The Terror Racket — Aug. 19
GORES, JOE: File #1: The Mayfield Case — Dec. 148
GOULART, RON: Rink — Nov. 89
GRAINGERHALL, AMY M.: Mr. Copable, Criminologist — Aug. 67
GRUBER, FRANK: Eagle in His Mouth — Sept. 17
HARRISON, MICHAEL: The Fires in the Rue St. Honoré — Nov. 131
HAY, JACOB: The Belkamp Apparatus — Nov. 32
The Name of the Game — Dec. 18
HAYES, BRIAN: Security Risk — July 142
HOCH, EDWARD D.: The Spy Who Worked for Peace — Aug. 44
The Spy Who Didn't Exist — Dec. 88
HOLLISTER, PATRICIA ANN: The Woman Who Couldn't Wear Red — Aug. 96
HOLT, JOHN: Number One — Dec. 111
KEATING, H. R. F.: The Justice Boy — Aug. 140
KEMELMAN, HARRY: Man on a Ladder — Nov. 6
LEASOR, JAMES: The Seventy-Sixth Face — Sept. 80
LUTZ, JOHN: Quid Pro Quo — Aug. 56
MACDONALD, JOHN D.: No Business for an Amateur — Oct. 24
MADDOCK, LARRY: The Death Wish — Sept. 73
MORAVIA, ALBERTO: Only the Death of a Man — Oct. 67
PENTECOST, HUGH: The False Face Murder — Aug. 6
PETERS, STEVEN: George Washington, Detective — Aug. 78
The Backyard Dig — Aug. 89
PICK, JOHN: They Said It Couldn't Be Done — Sept. 92
PORGES, ARTHUR: Murder of a Priest — Sept. 67
The Nose of a Beagle — Nov. 147
POWELL, JAMES: The Beddoes Scheme — Oct. 119
QUEEN, ELLERY: The President Regrets — July 94
Wedding Anniversary — Sept. 6
Uncle from Australia — Nov. 95
QUENTIN, PATRICK: Mrs. B.'s Black Sheep — Sept. 29

(Continued on page 161)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ontinued from other side

$32.85 Worth of Mysteries ONLY $1

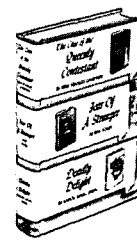
(IN PUBLISHERS' ORIGINAL EDITIONS)

ncludes 7 Perry Mason bafflers

ERE'S your chance to get Erle Stanley Gardner's very latest Perry Mason hit. Accept "The se of the Queenly Contestant" and two more w mysteries in a big 3-in-1 volume . . . *plus* SIX)RE Perry Mason cases in full-size, full-length, iividual volumes. *All* these mysteries would st you $32.85 in their original publishers' edi-ns. But you get them ALL for only $1.00 . . . as lramatization of the many advantages of mem-rship in The Detective Book Club.

"Cream" of New Mysteries for LESS THAN 97¢ EACH

As a member you are offered the "cream" of the and-new mysteries by top writers. Each month a get THREE of them complete in ONE hand-ne volume (a $10.50 to $11.95 value in publishers' regular retail editions) for only $2.89. You need NOT take any specific number of books — only those you want after reading the free Club "Preview" sent to you well in advance. Your books are clean and fresh, delivered right to your door.



SEND NO MONEY—Just Mail Postcard for ALL 9 Mysteries

You may cancel membership any time you please. These NINE exciting stories are only the beginning of your fun and savings. SEND NO MONEY NOW — just mail postcard to: **THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB, Roslyn, L. I., New York 11576.**

MAIL THIS POSTCARD NOW FOR YOUR NINE MYSTERIES

•

NO POSTAGE NEEDED

SEND NO MONEY — JUST MAIL THIS POSTCARD 16-303

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB 7-EV
Roslyn, L. I., New York 11576

Please enroll me as a member and send me at once the SIX full-length, hard-bound editions of Perry Mason thrillers, PLUS the brand-new 3-in-1 volume Club selection containing Erle Stanley Gardner's latest Perry Mason and 2 more great mysteries. I enclose NO MONEY IN ADVANCE; within a week after receiving my books, I will either return them all and owe nothing, or keep ALL SEVEN volumes, containing NINE first-rate mystery stories, for the special new-member introductory price of ONLY $1.00 (plus a few cents mailing charges).

As a member, I am to receive advance descriptions of all future selections, but am not obligated to buy any. For each future triple-volume I decide to keep, I will send you only $2.89 (plus a few cents mailing charges). I may reject any volume before or after I receive it, and I may cancel my membership at any time. (Books shipped in U.S.A. only.)

Mr.
Mrs.
Miss } .....
(PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY)

Address.....

City & State.....ZIP.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Perry Mason's new case

"The Case of the Queenly Contestant"—just published—is one of 7 Perry Masons included in this special offer!

9 great mysteries for only $1

THE CASE OF THE WORRIED WAITRESS
$350 in Publ. Ed.
THE CASE OF THE Beautiful Beggar
Erle Stanley Gardner
a Perry Mason Mystery
$350 in Publ. Ed.
PERRY MASON—THE CASE OF THE TROUBLED TRUSTEE
$350 in Publ. Ed.
PERRY MASON THE CASE OF THE HORRIFIED HEIRS ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
$350 in Publ. Ed.
THE CASE OF THE PHANTOM FORTUNE PERRY MASON
$350 in Publ. Ed.
PERRY MASON THE CASE OF THE DARING DIVORCEE by Erle Stanley Gardner
$350 in Publ. Ed.

YOU GET 6 of Erle Stanley Gardner's best Perry Mason bafflers in 6 full-size, full-length volumes.

1 The case of the **WORRIED WAITRESS**
A waitress is up for murder, and a worried Perry is stuck with a *blind witness.*

2 The case of the **BEAUTIFUL BEGGAR**
Perry agrees to help a lovely girl — who turns out to be a *cunning murderess.*

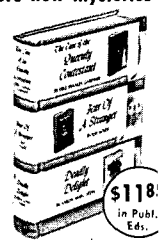
3 The case of the **TROUBLED TRUSTEE**
Dutton was *with* Palmer. Dutton's gun *killed* Palmer. Can Perry ever save Dutton?

4 The case of the **HORRIFIED HEIRS**
Perry's client and M Trent have a mut "friend" who wants *kill them both.*

5 The case of the **PHANTOM FORTUN**
Perry must defe *himself* — against charge of *framing attempted murder.*

6 The case of the **DARING DIVORCEE**
A suspected murc weapon disappears and the D.A. three ens to *jail* Perry!

YOU ALSO GET Gardner's very late Perry Mason and 2 more new mysteries this 3-in-1 volume.



7 The case of the **QUEENLY CONTESTANT** *by Erle Stanley Gardner*
Perry is involved w a $2,000,000 esta blackmail, and *locked-room murder*

8 **FEAR OF A STRANG** *by Rae Foley*
Kay Forbes is *powe less* to stop a KILL who wants her $400,0

9 **DEADLY DELIGHT** *by Aaron Marc Stein*
A Turkish *church* the scene of *murde ous mayhem.*

(See other side)

FIRST CLASS
PERMIT No. 47
Roslyn, N. Y.

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
No postage stamp necessary if mailed in the United States

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I.
New York 11576

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED